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SERMON OUTLINES
on
THE RESTORATION PLEA

by

C. C. CRAWFORD, Ph.D.

Author of

Sermon Outlines on Acts
The Crawford-Musgrave Debate
Sermon Outlines on the Cross of Christ

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FOREWORD

Back in 1927 when Dr. C. C. Crawford prepared and published *Sermon Outlines on the Restoration Plea,* the book found a hearty reception among those who love the Bible and plead for the unity of all believers upon the simple terms of the New Testament. For many years the book has been out of print, yet people are continually asking for it. Also a whole generation of men unacquainted with the original edition has grown up. These men need the wealth of material which Dr. Crawford has assembled.

Some of us who love the Restoration Plea feel that the old messages used with such telling force by the pioneers are being heard too seldom today. It is hoped that the publication of this book will put it into the hearts of many—especially our young preachers—to use again the messages which shook sectarianism and denominationalism from center to circumference in a former generation.

All great preachers use the sermons of others. They are stimulated and encouraged by hearing and reading them. It is not originality we need today—it is the gospel of Christ. Give us men with souls on fire with the old time message—men who are neither ashamed nor afraid to preach the truth—and the world will be stirred again.

We are grateful to the author for his "work of faith and labor of love" in preparing these sermons and for the privilege of cooperating with him in reprinting them.

GEORGE W. DEHOFF

Murfreesboro, Tennessee
March 1, 1956

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
used in this book

p., page.

pp., pages.

v., verse.

vv., verses.

i.e., that is.

par., paragraph.

ff., following.

edit., edition.

cf., compare.

ch., chapter.

chs., chapters.

ibid., the same.

in loco., in this place, or in this connection.

viz., namely.

fn., footnote.

vol., volume.

art., article.

e.g., for example.

PREFACE

Because a preface is usually uninteresting it is quite often ignored by the average reader. However, in presenting this book to the public, a few introductory explanations are necessary.

In the first place, I lay no claim to originality as regards the subject-matter of this volume. I have merely attempted to assemble and present in outline form, for use in pulpit work and in Bible classes, the great themes and thoughts of the outstanding preachers of the Restoration movement. The only originality which the book may claim lies in the *arrangement* of the various outlines.

In the second place, I have tried to give honor to whom honor is due. A few of the subjects, some of the subject-matter, and many of the illustrations are adapted from other books and sermons; in such cases, credit has been given the author in either parentheses or footnotes.

Lastly, it is intended that other volumes shall follow this; to the end that the history and teaching of the churches of Christ may be embodied in a series of books that will preserve "the plea" for future generations. This, in the providence of God, is my plan at the present time; however, it must be remembered that man proposes, but God disposes.

With the above explanatory statements, this volume is sent forth on what I hope may be its mission of en-

lightenment and service, not only to those who stand for "the ancient order of things," but also to a great multitude who are earnestly seeking the way out of denominational bondage into the glorious light and life of "the perfect law of liberty." Thus may it in some way help to answer our Lord's prayer for the unity of His people!

C. C. CRAWFORD.

St. Louis, Mo.
June 1, 1927.

I

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:37-47.

Text: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers."

—Acts 2:42.

The theme defined. By the term, "church of the New Testament," is meant: (1) that institution, the pattern of which was revealed to the apostles by the Master Himself during the forty days He spent with them between His resurrection and ascension, Acts 1:1-5; (2) the church whose organization came directly from Christ and was set up by His Spirit-filled apostles after He had returned to the Father; (3) this church as it was instituted and organized by the apostles, previous to the introduction of human creeds and practices; (4) in short, the "one body," mentioned by Paul, vitalized by the one Spirit, animated by the one hope, acknowledging the one Lord, professing one faith, submissive to one baptism, and humbly dependent upon the one God and Father of all, Eph. 4:4-6. It shall be our purpose in this sermon to study this divine institution in its various phases of organization and activity as follows:

1. *As to Origin.* When was this church established? A few Scriptures should be noted, viz.,

(1) *Isa. 2:2-4.* Here the prophet tells us expressly that the word of the Lord (the gospel) should go forth

from Jerusalem. "In the latter days" is, in all probability, a phrase used to denote the entire Christian era.

(2) *Matt. 3:2.* The message of John the Baptizer was, "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand.*" The Messiah introduced, Matt. 3:13-17.

(3) *Matt. 8:5-13.* The first intimation that the Gentiles should share the blessings and privileges of this divine institution.

(4) *Matt. 10:5-7.* The twelve sent out to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(5) *Luke 10:8-9.* The seventy sent forth to proclaim its nearer approach.

(6) *Matt. 18:15-17.* Here we have outlined the method of settling disputes in the institution soon to be established.

(7) *Matt. 16:13-19.* The conversation between Jesus and the twelve at Caesarea Philippi. Note the Master says, "*will build,*" and not, "*have built.*" Here the church is spoken of by its Founder as a thing of the future; it could not have been established, therefore, in the time of Adam, nor of Abraham, nor of Moses, nor of John the Baptizer. It was yet *a thing of the future.*

(8) *Luke 24:46-49.* Salvation in the name of Christ to be preached first at Jerusalem. This proclamation not to begin until the apostles are endued with power from on high, i. e., clothed with infallibility through Holy Spirit baptism (overwhelming). Such power was necessary to qualify them to be trustworthy witnesses of the facts of the gospel.

(9) *Acts 1:1-5.* The forty-day period between the resurrection and ascension spent by the Master with His apostles, "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." They are again enjoined to wait in

Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was during this period that Jesus gave them the plans and specifications for the new institution.

(10) *A few facts to consider:* As a new *covenant*, it was not binding until ratified by the blood of Christ; as a *testament*, it was not in operation as long as the testator lived; as a *kingdom*, it was not established until the King ascended and was crowned; as a *church*, its history shows that it was not organized while Jesus was upon earth; and as the *great salvation*, it was only begun to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, Heb. 2:3.

(11) Again, Christ could not have consistently claimed all authority in heaven and upon earth until He had conquered death. It was *necessary* for Him to suffer and die and to arise from the dead before repentance and remission of sins *could* be preached in His name. The facts of the gospel, on which the church was founded, could not have been preached until they had actually transpired. The facts of the gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. 1 Cor. 15:1-4. These were publicly proclaimed as *facts* for the first time in the history of the world on Pentecost, A. D. 30, the first Pentecost after His resurrection.

(12) *Acts 2.* The apostles, baptized in the Holy Spirit, speak as the Spirit gives them utterance. The gospel preached *in fact.* Three thousand hear, believe and obey, thus becoming the charter-members of the church of Christ. The date—Pentecost, A. D. 30. The place—Jerusalem, thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy.

2. *As to Terms of Admission.* These were four in number, viz.,

(1) *Faith in Christ* as the Son of God, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10.

(2) *Repentance toward Christ*, Acts 2:38, Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30, 2 Cor. 7:10.

(3) *Confession of Christ*, Matt. 10:32-33; which was made with *the mouth*, Rom. 10:9-10; and in the presence of witnesses, 1 Tim. 6:12.

(4) *Baptism into Christ*, Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 8:12, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 19:5; Gal. 3:27, etc.; which, as performed in New Testament times, was the *burial* (Rom. 6:3-5, Col. 2:12) of a *penitent believer* (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38-41, 8:12-37, 18:8) in *water* (John 3:23, Acts 8:36-39, 10:47) *for*, i. e., *unto*, the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16; Mark 16:16; John 3:5).

3. *As to Nature.* In this respect, the church was both *visible*, Gal. 1:13, and *invisible*, 1 Pet. 2:5. While it was the "general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), yet its members assembled for public worship in visible organizations known as "churches of Christ," (Rom. 16:16).

4. *As to Founder and Foundation.* Its Founder was Christ Himself who was also its Head, Matt. 16:18, Eph. 1:22, 23. It was built upon the eternal *truth* first stated by Peter at Caesarea Philippi, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. 16:18. This fundamental *truth* of the gospel is based upon the fundamental *fact* of the gospel, viz., that Jesus arose from the dead. However, as the *truth* is but the expression, and the *fact* but the revelation, of Christ's Sonship and deity, the church is said, in other Scriptures, to have been built upon Christ Himself, 1 Cor. 3:11, Eph. 2:19-20. The foundation of this church was not Mrs. Eddy, nor Joe Smith, nor Pastor Russell, nor Peter, nor Moses, nor

John the Baptizer; but the living, ascended and reigning Christ.

5. *As to Name.*

(1) As a universal organization, or *church catholic*, it was known as "the church" (Col. 1:18); "the body of Christ" (Col. 1:24, Eph. 4:12, 1 Cor. 12:27); "the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9, 1 Tim. 3:5); "the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28); "the general assembly and church of the first-born" (Heb. 12:23).

(2) *Local congregations* of the saints were called "churches" (1 Cor. 16:1, 2 Cor. 8:1, etc.); "churches of God" (1 Thess. 2:14, 1 Cor. 1:2); "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). For example, there was a "church" in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1), a "church" in Pergamum (Rev. 2:12), a "church" in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18), etc. The word, "church," is used with four different meanings in the New Testament. According to Cruden, it signifies: (1) "A religious assembly selected and called out of the world by the doctrine of the gospel, to worship the true God in Christ, according to His word, 1 Cor. 1:2, Rev. 2:7. (2) All the elect of God, of what nation soever, from the beginning to the end of the world, who make but one body, whereof Jesus Christ is the Head, Col. 1:18. (3) The faithful of some one family, together with such Christians as were wont to assemble with them for solemn worship, Rom. 16:5, Col. 4:15, Philem. 2. (4) The faithful of some one province, 2 Thess. 1:1."

(3) *Individual members* were known as "disciples" (Acts 11:26, 19:30); "saints" (Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, Phil. 1:1, etc.); "brethren" (1 Cor. 15:6, Jas. 1:2, 2 Pet. 1:10); "priests" (1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 5:10); and "Christians" (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).

6. *As to Creed.* The word *creed* is derived from the Latin verb *credo*, meaning, "I believe." The creed of the early church was Christ Himself. Belief in Him as the Son of the living God and as a personal Savior was the one and only item of faith essential to membership in this church. Peter was the first to voice this creed, Matt. 16:16. See also John 20:30-31, 1 Cor. 2:2, and Rom. 10:8-10. The importance of a public confession of Christ is stated in Matt. 10:32-33, 1 John 4:15, and 1 Tim. 6:12. The unchangeableness of this divine creed is stated positively in Heb. 13:8. Paul says, "I know him *whom* I have believed," not *what*. According to Moninger, this creed is (1) simple, (2) profound, (3) comprehensive, (4) divine, (5) a pattern, (6) capable of bringing out the best there is in our lives, (7) universal, (8) perfect. (See *New Testament Church*, p. 62).

7. *As to Discipline.* The discipline of this church was "the apostles' teaching," Acts 2:42. This was at first *oral*, but was later compiled in *written* form, and has been handed down to us in the New Testament canon. "The apostles' teaching" was the teaching of Christ, as revealed by the Holy Spirit, John 16:13-15, 14:26, 20:22-23; Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:1-5, 10-15; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, etc. The New Testament has always been, and always will be, a sufficient guide in religious faith and practice.

8. *As to Worship.*

(1) The members of this church assembled for worship, in local congregations, on each *first day of the week*, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18-22, 16:2; Heb. 10:25. This day was kept in memory of the resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:9) and was called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10).

(2) They "continued stedfastly" in four things:

(a) "*The apostles' teaching*," or the word of Christ, which was then *oral*, but is now *stereotyped*.

(b) "*Fellowship*." See Acts 2:42. The Greek word *koinonia*, rendered "fellowship" in Acts 2:42, is translated "contribution" in Rom. 15:26. In 2 Cor. 8:4, it is referred to as "the fellowship in the ministering to the saints." The term evidently refers to the contribution and distribution of funds for the widening of the kingdom, the preaching of the gospel, the care of the needy and the aged, etc. The *offering* was a part of the Lord's Day worship, 1 Cor. 16:2.

(c) "*The breaking of bread*," otherwise known as the communion of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16, or the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:20. This was the central institution of their worship and the primary purpose of their coming together, Acts 20:7. It was not a *sacrament*, but a *memorial* of Christ's death and suffering, 1 Cor. 11:23-26. It was not a communion with one another, but a personal communion with Christ, Matt. 26:29, 1 Cor. 10:16.

(d) *Prayer*. Prayer was a vital part of New Testament worship. It is only the means the Christian may use to obtain forgiveness of sins, Acts 8:22, 1 John 1:9, 1 John 2:1. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"—i. e., we who are *in Christ;* and if "we"—who are Christians—"confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Hence we are exhorted to "pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. 5:17.

9. *As to Organization*. The officers of the New Testament church may be grouped in two general classes:

(1) *Temporary officers*, viz., (a) the *apostles*, who were personally chosen and trained by the Lord Him-

self, Luke 6:13, and who were *eye-witnesses* of the risen Savior, Acts 10:41, 13:31; 2 Pet. 1:16; Acts 26:16-17. As a witness can testify only to what he has *seen*, it follows that the apostles could have had no successors. (b) *Prophets*, who were inspired teachers, Acts 11:27, 13:1-2; Eph. 4:11. The prophets ceased to function after the Word had been compiled and installed in the church, 1 Cor. 13:8, Rom. 10:8. They, too, had no successors. We have an inspired Book to guide us into divine truth.

(2) *Permanent officers*, viz., (a) *Evangelists*, who were fundamentally preachers of the gospel, Acts 21:8, Eph. 4:11, 2 Tim. 4:5. (b) *Elders*, Tit. 1:5-9, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:3-4. Other names given to this office were: "bishops," "overseers," "pastors" and "presbyters." To the elders or bishops of each congregation was committed the spiritual welfare of the flock. (c) *Deacons*, who were appointed to look after the temporal interests of the churches, Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

10. *As to Mission.* The mission of this divine institution was and is two-fold:

(1) *To preserve the truth of God*, 2 Tim. 2:2, 1 Tim. 3:15.

(2) *To proclaim this truth* to the uttermost parts of the earth, Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15. All other aims and duties of the church may be comprehended in these two basic works. When the church neglects either, she is failing just to that extent in accomplishing the purposes of Christ in the world.

11. *As to Unity.* This church was originally one body, Eph. 4:4-6, previous to the introduction of humanisms which corrupted Christian doctrine and divided

professing Christians into warring sects. It was the prayer of our Lord that His church might *always* continue to be one body, as He and the Father are one, that the world may accept Him as the Son of God, John 17:20-21. If the church was one body in the days of the apostles and for three centuries following, the church can become one body again on the same basis.

Conclusion. Amid the multiplicity of "churches" in modern times is it possible to find and identify this New Testament church? I suggest the following comparisons:

(1) What church in this community has no creed but Christ?

(2) What church in this community has no book of discipline but the New Testament?

(3) What church in this community requires the same terms of admission as did the New Testament churches?

(4) What people in this community wear the same religious designations as those worn in New Testament times, preferring to be called Christians only?

(5) What church in this community has no other officers but evangelists, elders and deacons?

(6) What church in this community insists that the ordinances be obeyed as they were in New Testament times?

(7) What church in this community meets upon each first day of the week for the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers?

(8) What church in this community possesses all the earmarks of a New Testament church?

Wherever you find a body of people practising these things, there you find a church after the New Testament pattern. Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." We invite you to unite with us now on the Bible and the Bible alone.

II

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:8-9, Acts 1:1-3.

Text: "According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it." —Exo. 25:9.

The tabernacle was God's dwelling-place in ancient Israel. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." The marginal rendering of the word "tabernacle," in our text, is "dwelling." The church is God's sanctuary, or spiritual temple, in the Christian dispensation.

Moses received the plans and specifications for the tabernacle during the forty days and forty nights he spent with Jehovah "in the mount." God commanded him to build the sanctuary according to the *divine pattern.* In like manner the apostles received the plans and specifications for the church of Christ during the forty-day period they spent in communion with the risen Christ, Exo. 24:18, Acts 1:3. During this period He spoke to them "the things concerning the kingdom of God."

When Moses came down from the mountain the tabernacle was built according to the divine pattern; When Jesus returned to the Father, the church was established according to the divine plan.

That the apostles feared a general apostasy from prim-

itive Christianity is evident from the numerous warnings they issued against false teachers, 2 Pet. 2:1, 1 John 4:1, 1 Tim. 4:1-3, 2 Tim. 4:3-4. Paul wrote that "the mystery of lawlessness" had begun to manifest itself even during his own lifetime and predicted a general falling away after his death, 2 Thess. 2:3-4. That heresies had crept into the church before the end of the first century is evident from certain sections of the letters to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 2:6, 9, 14-15, 20-23; 3:9, etc.

The transition from the true church as instituted by the apostles with its simplicity of organization and worship, into the apostate church with its multiplicity of corruptions and innovations, was very gradual, and was spread out over a period of some five or six centuries. Bishop Newton says: "The foundations of popery were laid, indeed, in the apostles' days, but the superstructure was raised by degrees, and several ages passed before the building was completed, and the Man of Sin was revealed in full perfection." This "falling away" manifested itself in various ways, as follows:

(1) In the gradual development of a visible hierarchy patterned after the political organization of the Roman Empire;

(2) In the modification of Christian doctrine through the influence of Greek scholasticism;

(3) In the introduction of Jewish and pagan doctrines, customs and ceremonials into the church of Christ.

(4) In the formulating and enforcement of elaborate church decrees and uninspired creedal statements.

(5) In the creation and development of a human priesthood vested with distinctively sacerdotal powers and privileges.

(6) In the assumption of both spiritual and temporal power by ecclesiastical leaders, culminating in the imperial decree which proclaimed the Bishop of Rome "Lord of the Whole Church and the Vicar of Christ upon Earth."

> "The writer does not believe it any exaggeration to say that between the Latin Christianity of the later Middle Ages and the Christianity of the *Acts of the Apostles* there is as much difference as originally existed between primitive Christianity and any of the religious cults which it came to displace. May we say again, the early church conquered the heathen world; the world also conquered the early church."
>
> —Kershner, *How to Promote Christian Union*, pp. 36-37.

This apostasy reached its climax in the crimes and corruptions of the Dark Ages.

God reigns in His moral universe, however, and the time came when the horrors that were being perpetrated in the name of the Christian religion became intolerable to Him. The Protestant Reformations followed:

(1) Huss, Savonarola and Wiclif denounced the corruptions of the papacy and gave their lives in martyrdom for the cause of reformation.

(2) Luther denounced the pretensions of the Pope, restored the Bible to the people and expounded the doctrine of justification by faith.

(3) Calvin proclaimed the sovereignty of God, and his co-worker, John Knox, carried the torch of reformation into Scotland and England.

(4) Later, John Wesley spoke out boldly against the formalism which had almost eaten the heart out of the Church of England, and urged a return to personal piety and more consecrated Christian living. The Wesleyan Reformation rekindled the evangelistic fervor of the

church and had a far-reaching effect on both the religious and political ideals of two continents.

It will be seen, however, that the foremost ideal of these great leaders was *reformation.* Not one of them conceived the idea of *restoration.* Their co-workers and successors likewise failed to get the vision of a complete return to the primitive faith and worship. Moreover, some of the corruptions and innovations of the apostate church remained after every successive reformation, and Protestantism thus adopted many of the humanisms of the Roman Church. While the Reformations accomplished much in the way of clearing the atmosphere, in the end they failed because they did not go far enough. Instead of going back to New Testament Christianity, they crystallized into denominations intrenched behind elaborate creeds. The ultimate result, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was that Protestantism found itself divided into more than one hundred and fifty warring sects, and these sects spent so much time and effort bitterly fighting one another they were unable to make any progress against the common enemy—sin. The Bible had been buried as deeply under the debris of theological speculation and dogma as it had once been submerged beneath the traditions and edicts of the papacy.

The time was ripe—the world ready and waiting—for another great religious awakening. It came—but this time it was a *restoration,* and not a *reformation.* It came with a force and vigor which shook the foundations of the Christian world; with a message that swept down through the nineteenth century with the impact of the Pentecostal message; and with a plea that proposed nothing short of the breaking down of all de-

nominational walls, the abandonment of all humanisms, and the reproduction of the faith, worship and unity of the original church built according to the divine pattern.

We shall analyze this Restoration movement of the nineteenth century as follows:

I. *Causes.* Every great change or movement in human events—social, political or religious—has its explanation. It springs from certain well-defined conditions. It is the effect of certain causes. The same is true of the Restoration movement. The following might be mentioned as the conditions which gave birth to this movement:

(1) *Dissatisfaction with human creeds.* For almost four centuries the great Protestant denominations and their ecclesiastical leaders had been forcing elaborate creedal statements upon their communicants as tests of fellowship. These creeds had been written originally for purposes of protection and defense, but they developed into prolific sources of sectarian strife. At best these documents were but expressions of human opinions forced upon the masses by a self-constituted clergy; and many of them contained items which were objectionable to thinking people. They completely set aside the authority of Christ and kept Christendom divided into warring denominations.

> "Two men were debating the subject [creeds] at Dry Run, Kentucky. One, a Calvinistic Baptist, maintained that his Confession of Faith was a better bond of union among Christians than the Bible alone. His anti-creed opponent was so sure of his position that he proposed to submit the question to a Frenchman who had listened to the entire debate. The judge, making each disputant take into his hand the creed which he had defended, asked of the man with the New Testament who had made his creed.

" 'Jesus Christ', was the answer.

"Turning to the other, he said: 'And who, my friend, made yours?'

" 'It was adopted in the city of Philadelphia, in the year 1742,' came the reply.

"The Frenchman continued. 'Very well, then, gentlemen, that is enough. If you follow your creed, Mr. Christian, when you die, it will take you to Jesus Christ. Follow yours, Mr. Baptist, and when you die, you will go to Philadelphia.' "

—Jennings, *Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ*, p. 230.

(2) *The dogma of total depravity.* The prevailing theology of the day was Calvinism. It was taught everywhere that man was conceived and born in sin, totally depraved, as dead spiritually as Lazarus was physically; therefore, as it required a special miracle to raise Lazarus from the dead, so it required a special, miraculous, and irresistible manifestation of the Holy Spirit to lift the depraved soul from the grave of sin. All men, said the theologians of that day, are guilty of original sin; even infants, if "unbaptized," are doomed to eternal punishment. Men were taught that they were powerless to come to God for salvation; that they were to wait for God to come them in a manifestation of irresistible power. All they could do in the meantime was to agonize and weep and pray; if their prayers were unavailing, they were classed among the non-elect. This dogma made man a mere toy in the hands of his Maker; in theory it placed the responsibility for personal salvation on God alone; and in effect it drove thinking people into either infidelity or Universalism.

(3) *The mystical conception of conversion.* The Calvinistic theory of conversion was that each conversion was a special act of divine mercy. The gospel was not looked upon as a great amnesty proclamation

to all people, offering pardon on specific terms, the acceptance of which and compliance with which constituted a New Testament conversion. On the contrary, every conversion was a mysterious, unexplainable act of God. Every conversion had to have "miraculous accompaniments," such as a dream or vision, the ringing of a bell, the appearance of an angel, or the singing of a choir invisible. It can readily been seen that this mystical theory of conversion appealed only to people who were temperamentally emotional; thinking people, unable to experience these psychical manifestations, drifted into indifference and unbelief.

> Commenting on Calvinism in general, Barton W. Stone has the following to say: "Let me here speak when I shall be lying under the clods of the grave. Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs on Christianity in the world. It is a dark mountain between heaven and earth, and is amongst the most discouraging hindrances to sinners from seeking the kingdom of God, and engenders bondage and gloominess to the saints. Its influence is felt throughout the Christian world, even where it is least suspected. Its first link is total depravity yet are there thousands of precious saints in this system."
>
> —*Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*, pp. 33-34

(4) *General neglect of the Bible.* The Bible was a "dead letter." People expected something more than "the mere word" as evidence of pardon. The Bible held about the same place it holds in the modern lodge room, where it adorns its accustomed position on the altar and is occasionally referred to in the ritualism of the lodge; it was not looked upon as the Book of Life, to be read, studied, and its teaching translated into personal conduct and piety. Strange to say, Protestants knew very little about the Bible. The theologians had buried

it almost as effectively beneath their speculations as the Roman Church had covered it with her traditions. There was no attempt, one hundred years ago, to properly divide the Word into covenants and dispensations; no attempt to tell people what to do to be saved in apostolic terms. The average denominational exhorter of that day would have referred the inquiring penitent to the Psalms of David or the wailings of Jeremiah to find out what to do to be saved, as quickly as to the book of Acts. They did not seem to understand the truth that is now pretty generally accepted by all Protestants, viz., that we are under the gospel, not the law of Moses. The fact of the matter is that Protestantism, within three centuries after Martin Luther, had practically buried anew the Book which the great Reformer had dug out of the papal and monastic rubbish of the Dark Ages.

(5) *Rampant sectarianism.* Not only was Christendom divided into warring parties, but these sects were engaged in bitter strife with one another. Particularly was this true of the Methodists and Baptists who were contending with each other for supremacy. They completely ignored our Lord's prayer for the unity of His people; they overlooked, for some unaccountable reason, apostolic warnings against strife and division. So far as they were concerned, these positive Scriptures might just as well have been omitted from the New Testament. Not only did they ignore these Scriptures, but they even defended denominationalism. They argued that the various denominations were needed to suit the varying temperaments of people. Their favorite analogies were those of a tree and its branches, and an army and its divisions. The church of Christ is the trunk, said they, and the denominations are the branches.

Or, as an army must be divided into infantry, cavalry, artillery, etc., with each division performing its allotted task, so that men may choose which branch of the service they prefer; so the Lord's army must be divided into Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., that people may choose the particular division in which they prefer to enlist. They overlooked the fact that this hypothetical army was so wasted by internal strife it was powerless to make any progress against the common foe. They were blind to the theological monstrosity their reasoning created under the figure of a tree and its branches. Imagine a tree with one hundred and fifty different branches, each branch bearing a different kind of fruit with a different name. Moreover, if the denominations are the branches, where is the trunk? Why belong to a branch when it is possible to belong to the trunk? Why belong to a denomination when one may belong to the church of Christ itself? As a matter of fact they were so blinded by prejudice they could not see the evils of denominationalism. Instead of spending their time and efforts in winning souls for Christ, the general effort was to win the unconverted to this party or that; and thus both talent and money which should have been consecrated to the upbuilding of the kingdom of God was foolishly squandered in perpetuating strife and division. Though divided over human opinions and theological dogmas, some of these parties were too sectarian to even commune with one another. And woe unto that unfortunate soul who chanced to stray outside his own particular denominational pen—all he could expect was trial and excommunication forthwith.

(6) *General religious stagnation and a widespread decadence of morals.* It will be recalled that the Revolution in France, with its accompanying "Reign of Terror," produced in that country a wave of rationalism and "free thought." Voltaire was the foremost representative of the French school of radicals; his inherent genius made him a brilliant, yet erratic and misguided, foe of revealed religion. To those who are living to-day it is apparent that this wave of infidelity was only the reaction against the rapacity and corruption of the Roman ecclesiasticism which had ruled France for so many long centuries and which had committed so many crimes in the name of the Christian religion. The backwash of this new outburst of infidelity reached the United States during the Revolutionary Era and found a flourishing field in the newly-formed republic of the New World. Thomas Paine, one of the foremost patriots of the Revolutionary Period, is remembered to-day largely because of his attacks upon the Bible and the Christian faith. Skepticism was rampant in the colleges and universities of the United States during this period, and the spread of infidelity was generally enhanced as a result of the reaction produced in the minds of intelligent people by the prevailing strife and intolerance among professing Christians. Public morals dropped also to a correspondingly low level. Intemperance, gambling, vice, even debauchery, prevailed to an alarming degree everywhere; and crime and depravity were all too common all over the Union. Drunkenness, during this period, was as rife in the ranks of the clergy as among the laity. It was nothing uncommon for an itinerant preacher of that day to ride to his appointment with a Bible in one saddle-bag and a bottle of whiskey

in the other, and quite frequently he failed to materialize at the appointed time because of an attack of "overstimulation."

> The Presbyterian General Assembly in 1798 issued a general letter containing the following resume of the situation: "Formidable innovations and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion. Scenes of devastation and bloodshed unexampled in the history of modern nations have convulsed the world, and our country is threatened with similar concomitants. We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principles and practice among our fellow-citizens, a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity, which in many instances tends to atheism itself. The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportionate to our declension in religion. Profaneness, pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness, and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence, greatly abound."

One of the foremost political radicals of that day was Robert Owen, who may be styled the first notable "communist," and whom Alexander Campbell vanquished completely in public debate. To summarize, infidelity was everywhere; moral ideals were correspondingly low; there was a marked falling away in the mental and spiritual acumen of the Christian ministry; and both church and state were in a bad condition morally and spiritually. These facts all indicated that the time was at hand for a great religious awakening.

II. *Sources.* The Restoration movement originated in the closing decade of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. It was the finished product of four preliminary movements which originated in as many widely separated parts of the country at al-

most the same time, each independent of and unknown to the leaders of the others, at least until the year 1806.

(1) The first of these movements in point of time was that of James O'Kelly in Virginia and North Carolina. O'Kelly, though a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was decidedly out of sympathy with the government of that body. His opposition to ecclesiastical tendencies within the church for which he preached reached its culmination at the Baltimore Conference of 1793, the action of which precipitated his complete withdrawal from the ranks of Episcopal Methodism. The secession of O'Kelly reached its height in 1795 and occasioned a loss of some seven thousand communicants from the Methodist Episcopal Church. O'Kelly and his followers were first dubbed "Republican Methodists," a name which they later repudiated for the name "Christian" only.

(2) The second of these preliminary movements originated in New England. In September, 1802, a Baptist, by the name of Abner Jones, greatly disturbed "in regard to sectarian names and creeds," organized a church of some twenty-five members at Lyndon, Vermont. Later in the same year a second congregation was formed at Bradford. Other churches were organized at Hanover, New Hampshire, in 1802, and at Piermont, in the same state, in 1803. The church at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, under the leadership of Elias Smith, aligned itself with the Jones movement also, and Smith, formerly a Baptist, soon launched the publication known as *The Herald of Gospel Liberty* which, under different names, has continued down to the present day.

(3) A third movement originated in Kentucky, under the able leadership of Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian

minister. Stone, always a thorough religionist and an able preacher of God's love, found himself quite out of harmony with the Calvinistic dogmas then in vogue everywhere. His style of preaching soon brought down upon his head the wrath of the Presbytery. He and his co-laborers were condemned for preaching doctrines contrary to the "Confession of Faith," and were solemnly suspended. Immediately thereafter the revolting clergy drew up a document which they styled *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, dated June 28, 1804. The following signatures were attached to the document: Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard McNemar, Barton W. Stone, John Thompson and David Purviance. In this curious, yet history-making document, Stone and his associates *willed* the death of the Presbytery and its assimilation into "the body of Christ at large." They repudiated human names and took the name "Christian," declaring the Bible to be the "only sure guide to heaven." Barton W. Stone soon came to be the acknowledged leader of the movement and his work resulted in the establishment of churches all over Kentucky.

(4) The fourth and most far-reaching movement originated in Pennsylvania and Ohio under the able leadership of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott, all of Scotch Presbyterian faith. Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*, issued in 1809, was a history-making plea for the reunion of Christendom on the basis of the New Testament. "Nothing ought to be admitted, as of divine obligation, in the constitution and management of the church, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles upon the New Testament church, either

in express terms or by approved precedent." "Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament." With such ideals in mind, on May 4, 1810, a few earnest Christian souls gathered together in a congregation known as "The First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, meeting at Cross Roads and Brush Run, Washington County, Pennsylvania." From an independent study of the Scriptures, the two Campbells, who had been christened in infancy, came to the conclusion they had never been Scripturally baptized; and on June 12, 1812, they and their wives and three others were immersed in the waters of Buffalo Creek by Elder Matthias Luce, a Baptist evangelist. This was the first instance of New Testament baptism in America preceded by nothing more than a simple confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. The open disavowal of all human names and the repudiation of all human creeds by the Campbells and their associates resulted in a complete rupture with the Presbyterians, and later with the Baptists; after which they launched out aggressively on an undenominational platform, establishing churches of the New Testament order. On New Year's day, 1832, a great meeting was held at Lexington, Ky., in which Barton W. Stone, together with a majority of those who held his views, and Alexander Campbell and his co-workers, effected a union of the two movements, Stone having been convinced in the meantime that immersion was the only act which meets the New Testament ideal of baptism. This was the beginning of a great history. (It should be noted, parenthetically, that some of the congregations estab-

lished by Stone fused with others belonging to the O'Kelly movement to form what is known as "The Christian Connection" or "Christian Churches." The "Christian Connection" movement has never attained any noticeable growth).

III. *Principles.* In order to escape sectarianism and to promote the reunion of Christendom, the pioneers of the Restoration movement sought to stand on strictly catholic ground; to teach and practise only those things that are universally admitted to be Scriptural and right. The following summation of the principles of the Restoration movement is given by B. A. Abbott, Editor *The Christian Evangelist:*

> "1. A universal church. The pioneers said, and their successors today declare, that 'the church of Christ is intentionally and constitutionally one, and all divisions which break this unity are contrary to the will of God.'
>
> "2. They propose a universal book as the only rule of faith and practice, the only authoritative and complete repository of all that is necessary to faith, practice and expectation in this world and in that which is to come. That book is the Bible, the only book which can support claims of universality and of special revelation.
>
> "3. The universal confession of faith, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16: 15-16.)
>
> "4. The universal, Scriptural names,—believer, Christian, disciple, saint, brethren, and the other great words that describe the people of God.
>
> "5. The universally accepted ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, in form, administration and purpose as they were given and practised by Christ and His apostles.
>
> "6. The universal life, such as that set forth by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament.
>
> "7. The universal aim, which is to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven."
>
> —Abbott, *The Disciples*, pp. 17-18.

W. N. Briney, of Louisville, Ky., in a sermon entitled "What the Restoration Movement Stands For," found in a volume under the title of *The Watchword of the Restoration Vindicated*, pp. 19-42, summarizes the principles of the movement as follows:

1. Loyalty to Christ the first criterion of Christian character.
2. "No creed but Christ."
3. His word the only rule of faith and practice.
4. Belief in, conformity to, His teaching, our message.
5. "Thus saith the Lord" in matters of faith.
6. Liberty in matters of private opinion.
7. Christian unity on the basis of the New Testament.
8. Calling "Bible things by Bible names."
9. Disavowal of human names and creeds.
10. Practice of the ordinances as they were kept in New Testament times.
11. Each local church of Christ a democracy.

"The unity of the people of God, Jesus Christ being made the head of the corner, the basis of unity the restoration of the New Testament church in its name, creed, ordinances, organization and life, as set forth in the Scriptures—that is what the Restoration movement stands for" (*Ibid.*, p. 38).

IV. *Plea.* The message of the Restoration movement is usually referred to as a "plea." As such, it may be stated in various ways as follows:

1. It is a plea for the unity of all professing Christians on the basis of the New Testament, this unity to be achieved by the restoration of primitive Christianity, its laws, ordinances and fruits. In other words, the *objective* is Christian unity; the *basis*, the New Testament; the *method*, restoration.

2. Or, it may be described as a plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, to the end that the

original unity of the church of Christ may again be realized in the church of Christ of to-day, with the same name, creed, discipline, ordinances and polity.

3. In a nutshell, it is fundamentally a *plea for Christ*, comprehending the following particulars:

(1) That the *name* of Christ should be worn by His disciples to the exclusion of all human names:

(2) That the living, reigning, interceding Christ should be the only *creed* of His church;

(3) That the word of Christ, or the New Testament, should be the only *book of discipline* accepted by His church;

(4) That the *authority* of Christ over His church should be recognized and restored;

(5) That the *church* of Christ should be exalted above all institutions, and to the disruption of denominational organizations;

(6) That the *commands* of Christ should be obeyed by His people.

(7) That the *ideals* of Christ should be exemplified in the lives of all who wear His name;

(8) That *unity* in Christ, by faith, repentance and baptism into Him, should gradually supersede all denominationalism, to the end that there may be *one body*, of which He is both the Head and the Foundation.

The Restoration plea is Christo-centric. The Lordship of Jesus is the distinctive message of the New Testament, and hence of the Restoration movement.

V. *Outstanding Leaders.* The "Big Four" who figured in the origin and development of the movement have already been named. They are:

1. Barton W. Stone, who withdrew from Presbyterianism in Kentucky. Stone was essentially a mystic, and

has been called "the prophet of evangelism and piety." Stone contributed emotional fervor to the Restoration message.

2. Thomas Campbell, who was the first to recognize the evils of division and who became the first "prophet of reunion." It was Thomas Campbell who coined the watchword of the movement, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

3. Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell's gifted son, who became the recognized theological leader of the movement. Mr. Campbell was for many years the editor of *The Christian Baptist*, the name of which was later changed to *The Millenial Harbinger*. He was also the founder of Bethany College. He was a prolific and logical writer. In controversy, he was invincible; his public debates (with Walker, McCalla, Owen, Purcell and Rice, in order) established the cause of Protestantism, stripped the communistic theories of his day of every vestige of respectability, and revolutionized Christian thought and theology. He holds the position of unquestioned preeminence in the history of the Restoration movement.

4. Walter Scott, the eloquent and indefatigable evangelist, who began his labors for primitive Christianity at Lisbon, Ohio, in 1827. It was Walter Scott who first reemphasized "baptism for the remission of sins," and who first called attention to the Scripture sequence of the gospel commands and promises, viz., faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Other outstanding men of the Restoration movement who should receive special mention in passing are:

1. Elder John Smith, the dauntless pioneer evangelist of Kentucky.

2. Dr. Robert Richardson, historian of the movement, author of *Memoirs of A. Campbell*, a work of two volumes and 1248 pages.

3. Benjamin Franklin, another great pioneer preacher, also founder of *The American Christian Review*.

4. Isaac Errett, founder of *The Christian Standard*, author of several well-known books and one of the most forceful and cultured writers of the entire movement. Mr. Errett has been called "the major prophet of the second generation."

5. J. W. McGarvey, former President of the College of the Bible, Lexington, Ky., a world-renowned Bible scholar, preacher and writer; also author of *Commentary on Acts*, *The Authorship of Deuteronomy*, *Evidences of Christianity*, etc.

6. Joseph Bryant Rotherham, of England, author of *The Emphasized Bible*, one of the most remarkable of all Scripture translations.

VI. *Nature.* The chief characteristics of the Restoration movement may be enumerated as follows:

1. It is a *restoration* movement. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox and others set out to reform the Church of Rome, Wesley to reform the Church of England. Other reformatory movements were launched by Otterbein, George Fox, Roger Williams, etc. Stone, Scott, the Campbells, and their associates, however, did not seek to *reform* anything. Their slogan was: "Back to the New Testament." In other words, we seek to go back of Wesley; back of Knox, Calvin and Luther; back of Rome and her traditions; back of Constantinople and Greek Orthodoxy; all the way back to Jerusalem and the

first church of Christ. Nothing short of a complete return to New Testament ground, in faith, worship, life and service, can achieve the ideal of the Restoration movement.

2. It is an *undenominational* movement. It has no ecclesiastical machinery, nor systematic theology. Every local church has an undenominational name, an undenominational creed, an undenominational discipline, and an undenominational plan of salvation. The great multitude, who, on that first Pentecost following the resurrection, heard the gospel message, believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized into Christ, were added together by the Lord, i. e., incorporated into a church of Christ. They were not added to any denomination, but to the church of Christ. A local congregation to-day, consisting of baptized penitent believers continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers, is just as truly a church of Christ as was the church in Jerusalem. What made a Christian then will make a Christian now; and what made a church of Christ then will make a church of Christ now. I do not belong to any denomination—I belong to the church of Christ which He purchased with His own precious blood.

3. It is a *New Testament* movement. Catholicism is an admixture of Christianity, paganism and Judaism. Protestantism, in its various forms, has sprung from theological corruptions of Christian doctrine; and, unfortunately, Protestantism has fallen heir to, and adopted, many of the humanisms and innovations of the Roman Church. Pure, unadulterated Christianity, however, is found in the New Testament. Christianity is revealed in the teaching of Christ and His apostles.

The Restoration movement stands for the reproduction of New Testament Christianity and is therefore a New Testament movement. "Back to the New Testament" is its ideal.

4. It is a *doctrinal* movement. Doctrine is teaching, and vice versa. The Restoration movement was ushered in with plain, positive New Testament teaching. Its very life depends upon teaching. Its ultimate success depends almost wholly upon the faithful presentation of the New Testament Scriptures. To the extent that preachers of this movement avoid or neglect the doctrine of Christ, just to that extent will the movement fail to accomplish its aim. We do not claim to be any better, so far as ordinary piety is concerned, than Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.; but we do believe their denominational position is at variance with New Testament teaching, and we plead with them to abandon denominational barriers and to unite in the church of Christ. In so doing, both they and we are following a course that is infallibly safe under all circumstances. The Restoration movement depends upon doctrinal preaching for its very life; and to substitute therefor sweet sermonettes on philosophical, sociological, ethical or literary themes spells the failure of the pulpit and the ruin of the movement.

Conclusion. Modern conditions demand loyalty to the historic plea of the Restoration movement. There never was a time when the fundamentals of the Restoration message were so opportune as now. This is true for the following reasons:

1. *Because there is such a widespread spirit of anarchy in the world.* This is true of both church and state. There is a general breaking away from the old standards

both in religion and in government. Radical theories of government that would substitute license for liberty, free love for marriage, and atheism for religion, are alarmingly prevalent. The "New Theology" tells us that God did not make man in His own image, but that man created God in his own imagination; that all religious ideals are but concepts of human genius; that there is no authority over men's souls deserving of personal recognition except that of the "inner consciousness." In other words, if this theory is applied, there will be as many standards of religious faith and conduct as there are human beings. Every mind sets its own standard and every soul acts in the light of its own self-illumination. What is this but anarchy, and what can it possibly result in but universal lawlessness? The only antidote for this insidious poison is the old-fashioned gospel message. Let us then reject the authority of the "inner consciousness" and restore the authority of Jesus Christ!

2. *Because there is such universal dissatisfaction with the old-time traditions, creeds and dogmas.* The world is growing weary of the age-old dogmas which have held all Christendom in chains for so many long centuries. There is a general breaking away from the creeds and a reaching out after the simplicity of the New Testament faith. The ancient creeds still exist, true, but they are generally disregarded; the average denominationalist of the present century knows little or nothing about the creed of his or her particular denomination. The same is true of ancient rites and ceremonials. There is a general trend away from the ritualism of the past and in the direction of the practice of the Christian religion. Here the New Testament message is most apropos; no teacher was ever quite so practical as our Lord Him-

self. Nor was the world ever quite so receptive to the preaching of the pure gospel, with its plain, positive institutions, as at the present time. The democracy of primitive Christianity has a potent appeal for the people of the twentieth century who are throwing off the shackles of despotism in all parts of the world.

3. *Because there is such a widespread religious dearth over the entire world.* Conditions following the recent World War parallel those which followed the Revolutionary War, the only difference being that our modern infidelity is the backwash of German criticism and rationalism. We of the twentieth century have our crime wave, our social degeneracy, our break-down in morals, our spiritual decadence along the same lines as those of the post-Revolutionary era. Every issue of the modern newspaper reeks with tales of suicide, divorce, murder, scandal, and graft. Conditions are such that, if we are not careful, we are prone to grow cynical and to say, with a sneer, "Every man has his price." The need of the present hour is positive gospel preaching—preaching that exalts the Christ, upholds His standards of life and conduct, and that will restore to the church her influence over the masses. We do not need commercialism nor sensationalism—we need the apostolic message with true apostolic fervor.

4. *Because there is such a widespread desire for, and trend towards, the reunion of Christendom.* Time was when this plea for unity was scorned. The pioneer advocates of this now time-honored plea—our fathers in the Restoration movement—were unanimously ridiculed. Denominationalism was defended—Christian unity pronounced not only impracticable, but undesirable as well. It took courage to plead for the reunion of Christendom one

hundred years ago. How times have changed! To-day the churches of Christ no longer have any distinctive plea for reunion. All the great denominations are advocating some sort of a consolidation of forces. There is no longer any argument over the practicability of the question; that is conceded by all. There is no message which stirs the average denominational audience of the present day so deeply as the message of reunion. But the question of the present hour is: *How shall this unity be brought about?* The denominations, still loath to leave their denominational landmarks and institutions, are looking in the direction of a "league of denominations." Their highest ideal is *union*. So we must keep on preaching. Mere union, federation, consolidation, and the like, will never answer the prayer of our Lord. We must have the courage of the pioneers—we must emphasize the true and only permanent basis of unity. This is our message to the present generation, and may God help us to be faithful as were the pioneers, in order that we may go on, under God, to the completion of the fathers' tasks!

I have attempted, in this sermon, to sketch briefly the outstanding facts with reference to the history, teaching, and fundamental principles of the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century. These fundamentals, unfortunately, are being overlooked in the Babel of modern theology and philosophy. I am convinced there are literally hundreds of people who are hungering for this very message but do not know where to find it. This is no time for neglecting or "toning down" the plea; it is the very thing the world wants.

I have outlined in this sermon the principles for which this local church stands, and to the propagation of which

it is committed if it is worthy of being called a *church of Christ.* We need the cooperation and support of all who stand for these ideals. If they are in harmony with your spiritual desires and convictions, they merit your undivided support. I plead with you to come now, while we sing, and align yourself with that people who are honestly endeavoring to reproduce the church that was built according to the divine pattern.

III

A PLEA FOR CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-11.

Text: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name." —Phil. 2:9.

On this occasion I propose to define, analyze and discuss what is known as the Restoration plea.

This plea, whatever it may include, has frequently been referred to as "our plea." The term is both indefinite and misleading. Who are "our?" What is meant by "we," "our," and "us?"

Again, in what sense is the plea "ours?" Is it "ours" by right of purchase, invention or discovery? If "we" have a plea to which "we" are entitled by patent or copyright, then "we" have a perfect right to alter, amend, strike out, or add thereto, as "we" may see fit. "We" may substitute something for this plea, lay it on the table, under the table, or do with it as "we" please—that is, if the plea is "ours."

Is the "our" in "our plea" as broad as when we say, "Our Father who art in heaven.....?"

The point I make is this: This particular thing that has been called "our plea" is not ours; in reality, it is a plea for Christ, and it is as old as the apostolic message. It is Christo-centric; Jesus Christ is in all, through all, over all; in fact He is *the All* of the plea.

Our systems, theories, reformations and revolutions all have their day and cease to be. Like the manna of old, they are "good for this day only." But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. His word is as immutable as God; His truth as eternal as heaven; His life as pure as the snows of Hermon; and His church will stand long after the worlds have been on fire. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Mark 13:31.

The chief thing in Catholicism is the *machine*, or visible hierarchy; in fact, Catholicism *is* the machine. The chief thing in Protestantism is the *creed*. True, men are breaking away from creeds, and creeds are fast losing their power, yet the fact remains that the Protestant institutions have been built upon their respective creeds and confessions of faith. Destroy the written creeds and you have eliminated the chief supports of denominationalism.

The fundamental thing in Christianity as taught and practised by the apostles and early Christians was, not the machine—there was no ecclesiastical machine in the apostles' time; not the creed, because there were no written creeds until after the apostles had passed from the stage of human events; but the personal Christ Himself. He was the center and circumference of the apostolic message. That He died, that He was buried, that He rose again the third day, and that He ascended to the Father and was made both Lord and Christ—these facts were the sum total of the apostolic argument. "For I know him *whom* I have believed," 2 Tim. 1:12. Christ was all in all in apostolic preaching, 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 2:20.

As the Restoration movement stands for the reproduction of New Testament Christianity, it follows that

the central thought and theme of its preaching is likewise the *personal Christ.* The Restoration movement differs from Catholicism in that it repudiates all ecclesiastical machines; it differs from Protestantism in that it rejects all human names, creeds and ceremonials. It is a protest, not only against Catholicism, but also against those things which Protestantism has borrowed from Catholicism that are not to be found in the New Testament church. The fundamental message of the movement is the preeminence of Christ. The Restoration plea may be defined in a single sentence as a plea for Christ. This plea comprehends the following particulars:

I. *The Name of Christ.* The Restoration message pleads that the name of Christ may be worn by His people, to the exclusion of all human designations, for these reasons: (1) It is the name in which they are baptized, Acts 2:38; (2) It is the divine name, because Christ is divine; (3) It is the preeminent name, Phil. 2:9-11; (4) It is the only name in which we can be saved, Acts 4:12; (5) It is the name which was divinely bestowed upon the disciples, Acts 11:26; (6) It is the name in which we should do everything that we do, Col. 3:17. Human names are denounced by apostolic authority, i. e., as *religious* designations, 1 Cor. 1:12-16. Paul says the wearing of human names to designate religious parties is an evidence of carnality, 1 Cor. 3:4-5, Rom. 8:6-8. The name "Christian" is both Scriptural and catholic; it is the only name upon which the followers of Jesus can unite. The name "church of Christ," Rom. 16:16, is the only congregational name upon which unity can be attained. (Call attention to the fact that all the great denominations are co-operating at the

present time under the name of the Federal Council of the *Churches of Christ.*)

Dr. Henson once said: "If all Christendom would go back to the name Christian, it would be the happiest harbinger of a better day. Indeed we do not believe that practical union could be delayed much beyond such an event. Difference in names is one of the strongest walls of partition between Christian peoples which have been erected, and as long as it stands there is bound to be division."

Albert Barnes, the noted Presbyterian commentator, on Acts 11:26, says: "The name was evidently given because they were followers of Christ. That it was given in derision is not probable. It was readily assumed by the apostles. It is the most honored name that can be conferred upon a mortal, a name which rises above every other name. It is a bond to unite in one family all those who love the Lord Jesus."

Joseph Parker, the great English preacher, says: "By Christians I understand Christ followers, Christ lovers, Christ worshippers, Christ ones. Were we what we ought to be in integrity, in simplicity, and in equity of soul, there should be no nobler designation known amongst men, and no other should be needed. The one name that we ought to have is Christian."

John Wesley said: "Would God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgotten, and that we, as humble, loving disciples, might sit down at the Master's feet, read His Holy Word, imbibe His Spirit and transcribe His life into our own.....With regard to the name Christian, I would say, there is none like it; give it to me, and in life and in death I would glorify God in this name."

Martin Luther, according to Michelet, p. 262, said: "I pray you, leave my name alone; and not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul, 1 Cor. 1:13, would not that any should call themselves of Paul nor of Peter, but of Christ. How, then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the chil-

dren of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions. Away with them all, and let us call ourselves only Christians, after Him from whom our doctrine comes."

"I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last forever,"—*Spurgeon Memorial Library*, Vol. I., p. 168.

"If the church is the bride of Christ, the bride must have been the same as the bridegroom. If the church is the body of Christ, she must have the same name as her head. It would be strange if my body and my head should bear different names. In some comments on the passage 'The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch,' it is held that this name was given in derision. I think not. If you study the use of the Greek word 'called,' you will conclude they were divinely called Christians. God gave them that name. Jesus speaks about rich men blaspheming that 'beautiful name by which you are called.'"

—A. J. Gordon, Baptist, in *Select Northfield Sermons*.

You and I have no credit at the Bank of Heaven. Suppose you were to step up to the window in that glorious Bank and present a check for your soul, what would the Great Teller say? He would tell you that your check must have an endorsement. Then, suppose you were to offer as endorsement the name of Paul, or Peter, or Martin Luther, or John Wesley, or Alexander Campbell —would any of these names be sufficient security for your soul? No—you would find them insufficient. There is one Name, and one only, that will be recognized at the Bank of Heaven—the name of Jesus Christ. In it there is salvation, but in no other.

" 'Tis noble to be a Christian,
'Tis honor to bear the name,
To know that we're honored in heaven,

Is better than earthly fame.
The name implies one is noble,
It means he is honest and true;
It means his life is Christlike—
Does it mean all this in you?"

II. *The Person of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the *Person* of Christ as the one sufficient creed for all Christians. The word *creed* comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning "I believe." The only article of faith imposed upon Christians in New Testament times was personal belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matt. 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10, etc. But belief in Christ as the Son of God includes acceptance of the fact of His *personal atonement* for sin. That He offered His body as a living sacrifice, and shed His blood for the remission of sins, are the two facts of the atonement; and the atonement was sufficient because His Person was divine. Matt. 26:28, Rom. 3:24-25, Heb. 9:28, Matt. 26:26; Heb. 9:22, 10:20, John 1:14, etc. The creed of Christianity is the personal Savior.

Human creeds are incomplete statements and can not be universally accepted. At best they are nothing but the opinions of uninspired men. They set limits upon intellectual progress. They divide God's people by submitting tests of fellowship separate and apart from God's Word; they are written and enforced without divine sanction. They are superfluous and unnecessary. If a creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it contains less than the Bible, it doesn't contain enough; if it teaches the same things the Bible teaches, it isn't necessary because we have the Bible. Human creeds are the uninspired products of theological

speculation and contribute tremendously to the spread and perpetuation of denominationalism.

The true creed of the church of Christ is a Person. It could not be otherwise, logically. Faith does not center in a dogma, nor in an institution. I do not believe in baptism as such, but I believe in the Christ who instituted baptism and to please Him I shall be baptized according to His way. I do not believe in the Lord's Supper, but I do believe in the One who said, "Do this in memory of me," and I shall exert every effort to be in my accustomed place when the memorial feast is spread on each Lord's Day. We do not believe in things, but in *persons*. Therefore, says Paul, "For I know him *whom* I have believed," 2 Tim. 1:12.

This divine creed is Scriptural—no question about that. It is also catholic, i. e., universally accepted by all who are worthy of the name Christian. It is the all-embracing creed. It includes everything in God's revelation to man, and embraces everything in man's relation to God. It is as high as heaven, as broad as the human mind, and as inclusive as the illimitable spaces. "This creed was not made at Nice, nor at Westminster, nor at Augsburg. The creed of the living church of the living God is *the living, ever-living Christ. Christ* is our creed; that is a simple creed; that is a growing creed; that is a heaven-sent creed." (Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, p. 85).

III. *The Word of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the word of Christ as the sufficient book of discipline for His church. The word of Christ is the New Testament, John 16:14-15, 20:21-23. It is quite sufficient to furnish the Christian unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. I recall a lady, who had been reared

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a strict denominationalist, asking me on one occasion for the "book of rules" of the church which I was serving as minister. I could do nothing but offer her a copy of the New Testament; this I did, even at the risk of having been pronounced discourteous. *Truth* is sometimes more needed than *courtesy*.

The New Testament is the Christian's book of discipline. He should have no other—he needs no other. If the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works, written disciplines of human origin are unnecessary. Take this divine discipline and follow it. Are you inquiring what to do to be saved? Read Mark 16:16. Do you dare say, "He that believeth and is *not* baptized shall be saved?" Read John 3:5. If Jesus says you can not enter into the kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit, then *how can you?* Read Acts 2:38. What the Holy Spirit has joined together by the conjunctions, "and" and "for," let no theologian put asunder. May every Christian follow the apostolic exhortation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," Col. 3:16.

IV. *The Authority of Christ.* The Restoration plea is essentially a plea for the *authority* of Christ. This is fundamental. Most of our present-day religious controversies are not over questions of interpretation, but questions of authority. The Bible teaches that God delegated all authority to Jesus, who, in turn, delegated the same authority to His apostles and clothed them with the infallible presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and to protect them from error in revealing His word to mankind. There is no evidence anywhere in the Bible that divine authority was ever delegated to any one else; in fact divine authority ended

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with the work and revelation of the apostles. (See Outline on *Authority in Christianity*). All authority in Christianity is vested in Christ. Matt. 28:18. Eph. 1:22. Every local church is a *theocracy democratically administered.* In matters of faith and doctrine it is an absolute monarchy subject to the will of Christ which is the absolute law from which there is no appeal. In matters of expediency, or method, it is a democracy subject to the wish and will of the majority. The "historic episcopacy" has no authority to make any changes in the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not an Episcopalian, but a Christian. The presbytery has no authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Presbyterian, but a Christian. Not even the congregation has any authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Congregationalist, but a Christian. (How utterly absurd that the Board of Officers of any church of Christ should even discuss such a question as the reception of the "pious unimmersed!" That question was settled for us by Christ and the apostles almost twenty centuries ago. We are presumptuous to even consider or discuss it). I do not believe in baptism, but I do believe in the Christ who commands me to be baptized; therefore I am not a Baptist, but a Christian. I believe that everything in the local church should be done "decently and in order," but I do not believe that the church should be named after the *methods* used; therefore I am not a Methodist, but a Christian. Again, who instituted the ordinances? Our Lord instituted them; therefore, He alone has the right to alter them, to make changes in their observance, or to take them away. The Pope did not institute baptism; therefore the Pope has no right to annul baptism nor to substitute something

for baptism. The church did not institute baptism nor the Lord's Supper; therefore the church has no right to change these ordinances in any way. They are the ordinances of *Christ* which are to be perpetuated by the church.

Restore the authority of Christ over His church and bring all professing Christians to accept His authority, and you will have solved many of the problems which harass modern Christendom. You will have swept away all popes, councils, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations and assemblies which, in the past, have presumed to speak with authority. You will have swept Catholicism off the face of the earth and you will have destroyed every vestige of humanism that lingers in Protestantism. When all professing Christians recognize the exclusive authority of Christ over His church, Christian unity will soon be a reality. May God hasten the day when He shall reign on earth even as He now reigns in Heaven!

V. *The Church of Christ.* The Restoration message includes a plea for the restoration of the *church of Christ.* The modern world is so befogged by "churchanity" that Christianity has largely become obscured. We hear so much in these days about Luther's Church, Calvin's Church, Wesley's Church, and so on, we are liable to forget—in fact the world at large has almost forgotten—that our Lord Himself established a church. Matt. 16:18—here he speaks of it as His church. This church came into existence on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30. It is the church of Christ and the only church to which I care to belong. Let us go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of Rome, back of Constantinople, all the way back to Jerusalem and find, re-

produce and restore the church of Christ. This is the supreme objective of the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century.

VI. *The Ordinances of Christ.* The Restoration plea has a specific message with reference to the ordinances of Christ. It says they are not ordinances of the church, but ordinances of Christ to be perpetuated by the church as sacred trusts committed to the church for safekeeping.

The ordinances of Christ are three in number: (1) *Baptism*, to test the loyalty of the penitent believer. (2) *The Lord' Supper*, to test the loyalty of the Christian. (3) *The Lord's Day*, which is a memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

> True obedience does a thing commanded, does it without question, and does it in the way the author of the command wants it to be done. I might illustrate as follows: A gentleman who is about to die calls his two sons to his bedside. He tells them he owns a farm out in Kansas, that he has made extensive plans for the development of that farm, but that death threatens to prevent the execution of his plans. He asks for a map of the farm. He tells the boys just how he wants the farm developed. He points out on the map the spot where the house is to be erected, also the spot where the barn is to be built. Pointing to a certain place on the map, he says: "This is all bottom land. I have prepared it for corn and I want you to plant corn there next spring when you begin to develop the land. Up here on this rolling ground I want you to sow the wheat because it is especially prepared for wheat. Then, along the road here is a patch of new ground. The soil is fresh and fertile and I have planned to put an orchard on this spot. "Now, boys," said he, "after I am dead and gone, I shall depend upon you to develop the farm according to the plans I have given you." The sons agree to do so, and in a few days thereafter the father passes away. Several months later the boys decide to go to Kansas and take a

look at the farm. Taking the map with them, they make what would be called in modern language a "survey." They find the place where the house is to be erected and they agree it is an ideal location. They next find the spot where the barn is to be built and again they are agreed. They take a look at the bottom land and they see it is quite evident that this is the ground which will produce the corn. They take a look at the rolling land and again they are of the same mind and judgment. They express their astonishment at the wise judgment manifested by the father; thus far they are in complete accord with his plans. By and by they stroll over to the patch of new ground. John looks at it for a moment and Bill looks at it, then they look at each other and shake their heads. John says: "It looks to me like father has slipped just a bit in selecting this spot for an orchard. It is full of roots and stumps that will retard the growth of the trees. Besides, it is right here along the road and all the bad boys in the neighborhood will be clubbing the apples, pears, and peaches. I think we had better put the orchard back from the road," etc. Bill is of the same opinion. Now I have a problem in mathematics for you. That father gave his sons five specific commands. The commands were very clear-cut; there was no danger of their being misunderstood. In how many of these commands did the boys obey their father? You say, They obeyed him in four particulars, but disobeyed him in one. No, my friends, *they didn't obey him in anything.* They accepted his judgment in the four particulars because *it so happened that their judgment coincided with his*; but when it came to the last item, they did not agree with the father's judgment, and instead of obeying him without question, they followed their own judgment in the matter. How like people to-day! They are perfectly willing to believe and repent of their sins; but when they come to the baptismal water, they stop and say, "This is a matter for me decide in my own conscience," and in many cases they follow their own preference or inclination instead of submitting to the ordinance of Christ in the way it was performed in New Testament times

That Christian baptism was immersion under the preaching of the apostles is readily admitted by scholars

of all denominations. There is no more clearly established fact in church history than this. No man of any standing in the world of scholarship questions it for a moment. Moreover, *immersion* is the only catholic baptism: one who has been buried with Christ in baptism will be accepted in any church in Christendom with but one or two exceptions. There is no argument about immersion; all are agreed that it is baptism; the argument is all over the matter of substitutes for baptism. In other words, the controversy is not over what baptism *is*, but over what baptism is *not*. Why not accept the baptism that is unquestionably Scriptural and that is universally admitted to be right?

The plea of the Restoration movement is that the ordinances may be restored to their proper place and significance in the faith and practice of the churches of Christ.

VII. *Unity in Christ.* One of the most important items in the Restoration message is the plea for Christian unity—not *union*, but *unity*. There is a great difference between *union* and *unity*. Someone has facetiously remarked that by tying two cats together by the tail and throwing them over a clothes-line one would have a union, but not much unity. Our Lord prayed for the unity of His people, John 17:20-21. The apostles condemned division in no uncertain terms, 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-5. The church of the New Testament was a united church, Eph. 4:4-6.

It is quite evident that the present divided condition of Christendom is the direct antithesis of the ideal for which our Lord prayed. It is equally evident that divisions are wasting the church and nullifying the effects of gospel preaching. As John R. Mott has said,

"The price that has been paid for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world."

Someone inquires: Is Christian unity possible? If Christian unity is impossible, then our Lord prayed for an impossibility. Moreover, if Christian unity does not come to such an extent as to include all who claim to be Christians, it will be due to the fact that *men will not allow it to come.*

The question arises here: How did Christ, through the apostles, go about the task, in New Testament times, of building a *united body?* This is a worth-while question. The answer is very clear. The first thing the apostles did under the guidance of the Spirit, was to bring into existence a local church of Christ which was a united church. See Acts 2:44-47, 4:32. Note that the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This church in Jerusalem was a wonderfully united church. In establishing such a united church of Christ, it should be noted that the apostles did not make their appeal to the Pharisees, nor to the Sadducees, nor to the Herodians, etc., *as sects.* No—they made their appeal to *individuals* to come out of Judaism; those who obeyed the gospel were then added together into a local church and as other individuals came from time to time they were added to the original group. Thus there was a united church of Christ in Jerusalem. The next step was to establish churches of the same faith and order in adjoining cities and towns. By and by there was a church of Christ in Antioch, another in Samaria, another in Philippi, another in Thessalonica, and so on. In this manner the united church of Christ spread over the entire known world even before the death of the apostle Paul. How was it all done? It started with a *united*

local church in Jerusalem; thence the lines were extended by establishing local churches of Christ in other cities; and the sum total of all the members of these united local churches constituted the united universal church of Christ.

Herein lies a great lesson for the churches of Christ of the present century. Not only the Scriptures, but observation and experience as well, proclaim the absolute folly of appealing to any denomination or denominational group, as such, in the matter of bringing about unity. The appeal must be made to individuals to come out of denominationalism and to unite in Christ. This was the method used in apostolic times and by divine authority. It was the method used by the pioneers of the Restoration movement and the Word of God prevailed mightily. Churches of the New Testament order sprang up all over the country in an incredibly short time. Later, out of an exaggerated conception of religious courtesy, the method was changed from *proclamation* to *negotiation.* The result has been temporary stagnation. It should be remembered that a merger of denominations is not unity. The ideal for which Christ prayed is not achieved in a "league of denominations;" it can be achieved only by the elimination of denominational barriers and the breaking down of denominational walls. I look upon the time and energy that is being spent at present negotiating with the self-constituted leaders of denominationalism, in vain endeavors to achieve consolidation through human schemes of union, as nothing but sheer waste of effort. The thing to do is to rekindle the fires of evangelism; to extend the lines into every community in the land; and leave the results with God. Preach the Word to individuals; plead with them to abandon sectarianism and to become one in Christ

Jesus; go here, there, everywhere with the New Testament message; until the whole Christian world shall come to recognize and accept the New Testament basis. Then, if it should turn out that the ideal for which Jesus prayed can not be achieved to the extent of taking in the whole of Christendom, due to the prejudices and perversities of mankind, we may have the satisfaction of knowing that it shall have been realized, to a limited degree at least, in the unity of the churches of Christ; and we shall be comforted by knowledge of the fact that when the Son of man cometh, He will find the faith on the earth.

VIII. *Consecration to Christ.* The last, but by no means the least, item of the Restoration message, is a plea for personal consecration to Christ.

Baptism is not the end, but just the beginning, of Christian life and service. It is only the consummation of the divine plan whereby we are adopted into the family of God. It is the act in which we "put on" Christ. Gal. 3:27, John 3:5, Rom. 8:14-17. Following baptism we are given the Spirit of adoption as the earnest of our inheritance, and this indwelling Spirit endows us with the privilege of calling God our Father. Baptism is the final act of primary obedience through which we are saved from a state of alienation and by means of which we obtain the right to approach our Father through Christ, our High-Priest, in daily confession and prayer. 1 John 1:9, Heb. 10:19-22, etc.

In other words, baptism is the consummating act of conversion. Conversion is the complete surrender of self and substance to God, the submission of the human will to the divine. New converts thus inducted into the body of Christ must "continue stedfastly" in the

essentials of Christian worship, Acts 2:42; they must grow in divine grace, 2 Pet. 1:5-11; they must bring forth in life and conduct the fruits of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5:22-25. They must work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; they must fight the good fight of faith; they must press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God; they must run the race with patience. The crown of life is promised only to those who endure, Rev. 2:10.

The Restoration ideal not only demands the proclamation of first principles; it also includes going on to perfection. It takes in the Lord's Supper, prayer, liberality, meditation, consecration, personal piety and zeal. It includes everything essential to a devout Christian life.

'There's a sweet old story translated for man,
But writ in the long, long ago,
The gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Of Christ and His mission below.

"Men read and admire this gospel of Christ
With its love so unfailing and true;
But what do they say and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?'

" 'Tis a wonderful story—this gospel of love
As it shines in the Christ life divine,
And oh, that its truth might be set forth again
In the story of your life and mine.

"You are writing each day a letter to men,
Take care that the writing is true,
'Tis the only gospel some folk will read—
The gospel according to you."

Conclusion:

The story is told that a commercial traveling man once had the opportunity of listening to a sermon delivered by Henry

Ward Beecher. Beecher was one of the greatest orators of his day. On this particular occasion he was at his best; the audience sat motionless under the spell of his eloquence. At the conclusion of the service, the visitor passed out of the church, along with the vast multitude of worshippers, in profound silence. The silence was broken only when he turned to someone at his side to exclaim, "What a wonderful orator! What a wonderful orator!" Not long afterward the same man enjoyed the opportunity of hearing Chas. Spurgeon preach in London. Spurgeon was not so much of an orator, but he was a great preacher. His tongue was a flame of fire; his vivid denunciations of sin penetrated the most calloused heart. He was delivering a sermon, on this occasion, on the Christ of God. He used no big words, no high-sounding phrases; yet his style was forceful and awe-compelling. First he portrayed the suffering Christ of Calvary, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world; then his tones changed and he pictured the victorious Christ of the resurrection morn, triumphant over death and the grave. The great audience was moved from tears to exaltation. And as Spurgeon stood in the pulpit before him, it seemed to the stranger that he was forgetting the personality of the preacher; instead of the preacher he saw the Christ standing there, with outstretched arms, pleading with sinners to come to Him and cast their burdens upon His shoulders. This time, when the vast throng poured out of the auditorium, there was the same silence, but from a different cause; and the man who had once praised the eloquence of Beecher opened his mouth to exclaim, almost in a whisper, "What a wonderful Christ! What a wonderful Christ!"

"God highly exalted him and gave unto him a name that is above every name." And to think that He loves us so much He is willing to extend us the privilege of wearing that name! That privilege is yours this very moment if you will but accept Him as your Savior and obey Him in Christian baptism. Allow Him to enter your heart and assume authority over you soul. No privilege vouchsafed a human being is comparable to this! May God help you to decide—*now!*

IV

WHAT CHURCH DID JESUS ESTABLISH?

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-20.

Text: "...Upon this rock I will build my church..." —Matt. 16:18.

The words of our text are significant in three respects:

(1) In that Jesus speaks here of the church *in the future tense.* His church was not established, then, in the time of Adam, nor of Abraham, nor of Moses, nor of John the Baptizer. Compare Isa. 2:2-4; Matt. 3:2, 8:11, 10:7; Luke 10:9. Moreover, its history shows that it was not established during the three years Jesus was upon earth, Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:1-8. Cf. also Luke 23:51. Sacred history proves that it was established on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30, when Peter used the keys of the kingdom for the first time and opened the door of the new institution, Acts 2. *Acts of Apostles* is the book which gives us the early history of this church, under the personal supervision of the apostles who were guided into all truth by the Spirit of God.

(2) In that He refers to the church in the *possessive case,* "*my* church." We hear quite a lot in these days about Luther's Church and Wesley's Church and the Pope's Church, etc. Isn't it about time for the world to learn that Jesus, Himself, established a church? The church which He established did not even belong to the apostles; it was His very own, bought with His blood, Acts 20:28.

(3) In that He refers to the church in the *singular number*. He said, "my *church*," not "*churches*." The world of to-day is confused by the multiplicity of religious organizations which go under the name of "churches" in theological parlance. Jesus established *a* church, *one* church. How important that we know what to do to get into that church and how to live in that church and how to die in it! The plans and specifications of the church which Jesus established are found in the New Testament. See John 10:16 and Eph. 4:4-6. It shall be my purpose in this sermon to find and identify, if possible, the church which Jesus established, by calling attention to the principal facts regarding that church as outlined in the New Testament. We shall study:

1. *Its Foundation.* (1) Some may argue that the church is founded upon the Bible, or upon the New Testament. This can not be true. The establishment of the church preceded the writing of the New Testament. The church came into existence before the New Testament; therefore, if the church is founded upon the New Testament, it existed for several years without a foundation. (2) Roman Catholics, seeking to establish the dogma of papal primacy, claim that the church was established upon Peter. See Matt. 16:18. This can not be true for the simple reason that the masculine gender (*Petros*) is used where Jesus says, "Thou art Peter;" but the feminine (*petra*) is used in the statement, "Upon this rock." The "rock," then, must have been the truth which Peter had just confessed, v. 16. Cf. Eph. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 3:11. Is there a contradiction here? We conclude as follows: (a) In First Corinthians, chs. 1-3, Paul is writing not about the *church*, but about the gospel *message*. The foundation of the gospel message

is, of course, Jesus Christ. (b) The church as an organic institution is founded, however, upon *apostolic authority*. Peter, with the other apostles, was merely a stone in that foundation, Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. (c) But a foundation, in order to stand forever, must rest, not on shifting earth or sand, but upon a rock-like substance. So the foundation of the church of Christ has been laid upon the *truth* which Peter confessed, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. (d) Here we have the metaphor of a great building. The bedrock upon which this building has been constructed is the deity of Christ; the foundation is that of apostolic authority; the superstructure consists of all saints of God, "fitly framed together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord," Eph. 2:19-22. (e) Let it never be forgotten that the *truth* of Christ's Sonship is the *source* of all apostolic authority, Matt. 28:18-20, John 20:22-23.

2. *Its Head.* This church has one, and only one, Head. Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18. As the mind controls the physical body, so Christ, as the Head, controls the body of Christ.

3. *Its Name.* It is spoken of in the New Testament as:

(1) *The church*, Eph. 3:10.
(2) *The church of God*, 1 Cor. 1:2.
(3) *The church of the Lord*, Acts 20:28.
(4) *The church of the first-born*, Heb. 12:23.
(5) *The body, the church.* Col. 1:18.
(6) *The body of Christ*, 1 Cor. 12:27.
(7) *The household of God*, Eph. 2:19.
(8) *Churches of Christ*, Rom. 16:16, i. e., congregationally speaking. (a) Jesus said, "*My* church." There-

fore, it is the church of Christ. (b) The church is the Bride and Christ is the Bridegroom, John 3:29, Rev. 21:9, 22:17. What would people think of a wife who would refuse to wear her husband's name, and insist on wearing the name of some other man? Is it not dishonoring to Christ when His bride insists upon wearing a human name?

The members of the church of Christ are referred to in the New Testament as *disciples*, Acts 6:1; *brethren*, Acts 9:30; *believers*, Acts 5:14; *saints*, Acts 9:13; *priests*, 1 Pet. 2:5, Rev. 1:6; *the people of God*, Heb. 4:9; *the children of God*, 1 John 3:1-2; and *Christians*, Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Pet. 4:16.

4. *Its Creed.* *Creed* comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning, "I believe." Every church must have its creed. The creed of the church of Christ is Christ Himself, Matt. 16:16, 10:32-33; John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10. This creed is universal and all-sufficient. Human creeds are unnecessary and productive of sectarianism. There is just one article of faith in the New Testament creed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the one truth which a person must believe to be saved, Acts 16:31.

5. *Its Book of Discipline.* The church of Christ has only one book of discipline—"the apostles' teaching," Acts 2:42; John 20:22-23; 1 Cor. 2:9-13. The apostles' teaching was *oral*, at first; we now have it in written form in the New Testament Scriptures. Human disciplines and confessions of faith are at best but the opinions of uninspired men and should never be imposed upon Christians as tests of fellowship; the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

6. *Its Conditions of Membership.* A study of the cases of New Testament conversion recorded in the book of Acts will show that all who belonged to the church of Christ came into that church in identically *the same way.*

(1) *The three thousand heard* Peter's sermon, Acts 2:14-36; *believed,* v. 37; *repented,* v. 38; and were *baptized,* v. 41.

(2) *The Samaritan converts heard* Philip's preaching, Acts 8:5-6; *believed,* v. 12; *were baptized,* v. 12.

(3) *The Ethiopian officer heard* Philip's preaching, Acts 8:35; *believed,* v. 36; was *baptized,* vv. 36-39.

(4) *Saul of Tarsus heard* what to do from Ananias, Acts 9:16-17, 22:14-15; *believed,* 9:5, 26:15; *repented,* 9.8-11, 26:19; *was baptized,* 9:18, 22:16.

(5) *Cornelius* and his household *heard* the gospel from Peter, Acts 10:34-43; were *baptized,* vv. 47-48. We infer they believed, or they would not have been baptized.

(6) *Lydia* and her household *heard* the Word from Paul, Acts 16:14; were *baptized,* v. 15.

(7) *The Philippian jailor* and his household *heard the* Word, Acts 16:32; *believed,* v. 31; were *baptized,* v. 33, the same hour of the night.

(8) *The Corinthians heard, believed,* and were *baptized,* Acts 18:8.

In other words, when you hear the gospel preached; when you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God; when you repent of your sins; when you confess your faith publicly; and when you are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life; then you are added to the church by the Lord. To what church? To the church which Jesus established—the *church of Christ.* You are not added to a denomina-

tion; you are added to the body of Christ. Cf. Rom. 10:14-15; John 14:1; Acts 16:31; Heb. 11:6; Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:12; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27, etc.

7. *Its Items of Worship.* These were four in number:

(1) *The apostles' teaching*, Acts 2:42.

(2) *Fellowship* in the contribution and distribution of offerings, Rom. 15:26, 2 Cor. 8:4.

(3) *The breaking of bread*, Matt. 26:26-29, 1 Cor. 11:23-34.

(4) *Prayer*, Acts 12:12, 1 Thess. 5:17.

8. *Its Day of Worship.* The early Christians kept the first day of the week in memory of the resurrection of Jesus, which occurred on that day, Mark 16:9, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2. This day was called the *Lord's Day*, Rev. 1:10.

9. *Its Organization.*

(1) The term "*church*" is used in the New Testament in four different ways, to indicate: (a) all the elect of God, of every nation, from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of time, who constitute but one body of which Christ is the Head, Col. 1:18; (b) the elect of God of some one province, or group of provinces, 2 Thess. 1:1, Acts 9:31. (c) the Christians of some one community who were wont to assemble together for public worship, and who constituted the local congregation in that community, Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 1:2, etc.; (d) the Christians of some one family. Philem. 2.

(2) The churches of Christ in New Testament times were organically independent of one another, yet bound together by the ties of a common faith and fellowship,

Acts 11:29-30, 2 Cor. 8:4. Each church was under the direct authority of Christ, such authority being administered by the apostles. All fraternal relationships between the churches were purely voluntary.

(3) They had two classes of *temporary* officers: (a) *apostles*, and (b) *prophets*. The apostles were personally chosen, trained and qualified by the Lord, and had no successors. Acts 10:41, 13:31, 2 Pet. 1:16, John 20:22-23. The prophets were inspired teachers, Acts 11:27, 13:1-2, Eph. 4:11. The apostolic and prophetic offices ceased when the New Testament was compiled, 1 Cor. 13:8.

(4) They had three classes of *permanent* officers: (a) *Elders* (known also as bishops, pastors, overseers and presbyters), Tit. 1:5-9, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:3-4. (b) *Deacons*, Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13. (c) *Evangelists*, who devoted their entire time to the preaching of the gospel, Acts 21:8, Eph. 4:11, 2 Tim. 4:5. To the elders were committed the *spiritual* interests of the churches; to the deacons, their *temporal* interests; and to the evangelists, the *proclamation* of word and doctrine, 1 Tim. 5:17.

10. *Its Fruits.* (a) Christian growth, 1 Pet. 2:2, 2 Pet. 1:5-7, 3:18. (b) Christian liberality, Acts 2:32, 11:29-20, Phil. 1:3-5, 4:13-17, etc. (c) The fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22-25. (d) Evangelistic zeal, Acts 8:4, 11:19-21, 19:10, 28:30-31.

Conclusion: (1) From the above analysis we may safely conclude that a group of baptized penitent believers associated together for divine worship; meeting on each first day of the week for the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and the breaking of bread and prayer; who take Christ as their only creed and the New Testament as their only book of discipline; who are known

as Christians; and who exemplify in their lives the fruits of the Holy Spirit; *constitute a church of Christ in the New Testament sense of the term.* In the light of this conclusion, we invite you to identify the church of Christ in this community.

(2) Someone objects as follows: "But the church which you represent has not been in existence more than a century and a half. I understand the Church of the Disciples, or the Disciples' Church, was founded by Alexander Campbell." You have been misinformed. I do not belong to any "Church of the Disciples," nor "Disciples' Church." I do not even know of the existence of a "Disciples' Church." Nor do I belong to any church founded by Alexander Campbell, for the simple reason that Mr. Campbell and his co-laborers did not establish any church. They merely called attention to the characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ and sought to *restore* the New Testament pattern of the church. I belong, not to a "Disciples' Church," nor "Campbellite Church," but to the church of Christ.

(3) On Pentecost, three thousand people asked what they must do to be saved; they were told to repent and be baptized, which they did; then the Lord added them to the church? To what church? The body of Christ, or the church of Christ. Therefore, if we to-day believe in Christ, repent of our sins, and are baptized into Christ, the Lord in like manner adds us to the church. To what church? To the same one—the church of Christ.

(4) Someone inquires, "Do you mean to teach that all these good people belonging to denominational bodies are not members of the church of Christ, and will therefore not be saved?" I mean nothing of the kind. I personally believe that any person who obeys the Scrip-

tural terms of pardon and thereafter leads a Christian life is a member of the church of Christ, even though he may be worshipping under a human name and according to a human creed. However, all those who worship under human names and according to human creeds are contributing to the sin of division, and thus perpetuate sectarianism in the Christian world, 1 Cor. 1:10-15, 3:1-5.

(5) What made a Christian in New Testament times will make a Christian to-day. What made a church of Christ in New Testament times will make a church of Christ to-day. I have no name to offer you but the divine name, no church but the divine body. I pray that you may forsake denominationalism now and become *one in Christ*. Come while we sing.

V

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-20; Luke 24:45-49.

Text: "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, *beginning from Jerusalem.*"

—Luke 24:47.

This question to be answered in this sermon is: When and where was the new institution inaugurated? Or, when and where was the church of Christ established?

In answer to these questions various theories have been advanced. (1) Some will say, "The church was established in the garden of Eden on the day when God said that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent." (2) Others will say that it was established in the time of Abraham when God said, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." (3) Others, that the church was set up when the Jews were organized into a nation by Moses at Mount Sinai. (4) Others will argue that it was established in the days of John the Baptizer, when he stood on the banks of the Jordan and preached, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and great multitudes flocked to hear him and to be baptized in the Jordan. (3) Then there are some who will argue that the new institution has not yet been established; that it will not be set up until Jesus comes again and reigns personally upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. Then will Paradise be regained, they

say, and the kingdom of Christ will have its beginning.

One can see at glance that all of these theories can not be right. It may be possible, too, that all of them are wrong. There is just one way to settle the difficulty—by an appeal to the Scriptures. It shall be my purpose to call to your attention to the various Scripture passsages, in order, which have any bearing upon this subject.

1. *Isa. 2:2-4.* This clear-cut prophecy, uttered some seven hundred years before the Christian era, tells us that the word of the Lord (the gospel) is to go forth *from* Jerusalem. Jerusalem, then, and not Eden, nor Sinai, nor Mount Moriah, nor the banks of the Jordan, must be the *place* of beginning.

2. *Matt. 3:1-12.* Seven hundred years after Isaiah's prophecy the wilderness preacher appears on the banks of the Jordan. His message is, "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand.*" The Messiah introduced, Matt. 3:13-17, John 1:29-34.

3. *Matt. 8:5-13.* The first intimation that Gentiles shall share in the blessings and privileges of the kingdom.

4. *Matt. 10:5-7.* The twelve sent forth to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and divinely qualified to perform miracles of evidential value.

5. *Luke 10:8-9.* The seventy sent out to proclaim the *nearer* approach of the kingdom. "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

6. *Matt. 18:15-17.* Here we have outlined the method of settling difficulties between brethren in the institution about to be established.

7. *Matt. 11:11-12.* This is often quoted to prove that the kingdom of Christ was in existence in the time of John the Baptizer. It proves just the contrary.

The thought of verse 11 is, in substance: The least child of the kingdom is greater than John for the simple reason that John was not a citizen of the kingdom; and John was not a citizen of the kingdom for the reason that the kingdom of Christ did not exist in John's day. John's message was to the effect that the kingdom of heaven was *at hand*. John performed his ministry under the Old Testament, and the greatest person of the old institution is not to be compared with the least person who belongs to the New. The idea advanced is not that persons themselves are superior or inferior; but that the institutions are not to be compared so infinitely superior is the new institution to the old. The comparison is that of *institutions*, not *persons*. As regards verse 12, the following exegesis is very clear-cut:

> "Jesus here pictures the kingdom of heaven as a besieged city. The city is shut up, but the enemies which surround it try to storm its walls and force an entrance—an apt illustration which many fail to comprehend. The gates of Christ's kingdom were not opened until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), but men hearing it was about to be opened sought to enter it prematurely, not by the gates which God would open when Simon Peter used the keys (Matt. 16:19), but by such breaches as they themselves sought to make in the walls. Examples of this violence will be seen in the following instances: John 6:15; Matt. 20:21; Luke 19:11, 36-38; Luke 22:24-30; Acts 1:6. The people were full of preconceived ideas with regard to this kingdom, and each one sought to hasten and enjoy its pleasures as one who impatiently seizes upon a bud and seeks with his fingers to force it to bloom. The context shows that John the Baptist was even then trying to force the kingdom."
>
> —*The Fourfold Gospel*, McGarvey and Pendleton, p. 283.

This Scripture teaches clearly that the kingdom of heaven had not been set up during John's ministry as a forerunner of the Messiah.

8. *Matt. 16:13-19.* The conversation between Jesus and the twelve at Caesarea Philippi. Note the Master says, "*will build*," and not, "*have built.*" Here the church is referred to by its Founder as a thing yet of the future; which could not have been true, had it been organized in the time of Adam, Abraham, Moses or John the Baptizer. Note also that Peter is authorized to open the door of the church and to state the terms of pardon under the Christian dispensation.

9. *Matt. 26:29.* A distinct reference to the first observance of the Lord's Supper, fulfilled in Acts 2:42.

10. *Luke 24:46-49.* Salvation in the name of Christ to be preached first *from Jerusalem*, which is in accord with Isaiah's prophecy. This proclamation is not to begin, however, until the Holy Spirit has descended and clothed the apostles with power from on high, to make them infallible executors of the last will and testament of our Lord and Savior. This Holy Spirit baptism was necessary to qualify them to be trustworthy and authoritative witnesses of the facts of the gospel.

11. *Acts 1:1-5.* The forty-day period between the resurrection and ascension is spent by the Master with His apostles, "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." They are again told to wait in Jerusalem for the proper credentials. It was during this period that Jesus gave them the plans and specifications of the church.

12. *Matt. 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-18.* The great commission given. See also Luke 24:45-49, and John 20:22-23. Think of the incompleteness of the New Testament had it closed with the four gospel narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

13. *Acts 1:12-26; Acts 2.* (1) Note the atmosphere of expectancy. The apostles, together with other disciples, are in Jerusalem waiting. At the suggestion of Peter, lots are cast, and Matthias is selected to fill the vacancy created by the fall of Judas. During this interim between the ascension and Pentecost, the coronation ceremonies are taking place in heaven. During this period everything is quiet upon the earth, because there is no preacher in the world authorized to utter a word in the form of preaching. All is silence and expectancy. Finally the day of Pentecost arrives, with Jews present in Jerusalem from all parts of the known world. (2) Note the succession of events on the day of Pentecost, as follows: (a) the Holy Spirit descends in a marvelous outward demonstration and overwhelms the apostles, takes complete possession of them, Acts 2:1-4. (By reading Acts 1:26 and 2:1 as if there were no break in the narrative, it will be seen that the antecedent of "they" in 2:1 is "the eleven apostles" of 1:26. In other words, only the apostles received Holy Spirit baptism on Pentecost). (b) Under the influence of the Spirit, the apostles begin to preach. Peter's sermon is recorded in full. The burden of the sermon is that Jesus had been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Father, Acts 2:5-36. (c) Multitudes hear this sermon. Of this number there are approximately three thousand who are convicted and inquire what they must do to be saved, v. 37. (d) In reply to their query, Peter opens the door of the church and states the Scriptural terms of pardon under the new covenant, vv. 38-40. (e) These inquiring believers obey the terms of pardon and the Lord adds them to the apostles, and they, together with the apostles, constitute the charter mem-

bership of the church of Jesus Christ, vv. 41-47. *The date is Pentecost, A. D. 30. The place is Jerusalem.* (3) Here, in Jerusalem, is the *place* of beginning, and Pentecost the *time.* This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy and corresponds with the promises of Jesus, Isa. 2:3, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:4.

14. *Gal. 3:18; Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14, etc.* On the basis of these and similar Scriptures, it may be objected that the gospel was preached before the day of Pentecost. True, the gospel was preached, but *not in fact.* The facts of the gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. How could these facts have been proclaimed *as facts* until they had transpired? Christ could not have claimed *all* authority in heaven and upon earth until He had conquered death. It was a matter of necessity that He should suffer, die, be buried and rise again before repentance and remission of sins *could* have been preached in His name. True, the gospel was announced to Abraham, but only in promise, Gal. 3:18. Certain truths of the gospel were preached during the personal ministry of Jesus, but only in *preparation.* From Adam to Abraham, we have the gospel in *purpose,* Gen. 3:15; from Abraham to Isaiah, we have the gospel in *promise,* Gen. 22:18; from Isaiah to Malachi, we have the gospel in *prophecy,* Isa. 9:6-7; during the personal ministry of Jesus, we have the gospel in *preparation;* but on Pentecost, we have the gospel in *fact,* Acts 2:32. Anyone who thinks that the gospel was preached fully during the personal ministry of our Savior should consult Matt. 16:20, 17:9, 8:4, Mark 8:30, Luke 9:21, and similar passages. It is quite evident that the gospel was not proclaimed in fact, and that the church was not

established during the period of time Jesus was in the flesh.

15. *1 Cor. 5:7, Exo. 32:28, Rom. 8:2.* Not only was the time and place of the first gospel proclamation clearly announced by the prophet Isaiah, but it was typified in the giving of the law to Moses. It was fifty days from the slaying of the paschal lamb in Egypt until the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. At the giving of the law, three thousand people were slain for disobedience. It was also just fifty days from the slaying of our Passover Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world, until the apostles were clothed with the Holy Spirit, according to promise, and Peter holding the keys of the kingdom opened that day its everlasting doors. And on that day three thousand, entering the kingdom, were made alive through faith and obedience, Acts 2:41. Paul may well call the former law "the law of sin and death," and contrast it with "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

16. The following excerpt is a fit summary of our argument:

> "First, as a new covenant, it was ratified by the blood of Christ; as a testament, it was not of binding force while the testator lived; as a kingdom, it was not established until the King ascended and was crowned; as a church, its history shows that it was not organized while Jesus lived on earth; as the great salvation, it only 'began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.' Finally, as the gospel it was founded on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and was not preached until these facts had transpired."
>
> —Phillips, *The Church of Christ*, pp. 131-132.

The new institution was established in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30. Compare Acts 11:15.

Conclusion: (1) The following illustration applies the thought of this entire sermon:

"Some man inquires, what have you gained by preaching so long to find the place and time of beginning? Much is gained by it. Without finding this beginning there can be no clear and intelligible understanding nor preaching of the gospel. The preacher without this beginning distinctly fixed in his mind, can no more preach intelligently than a pilot can run his ship to a given point placed out at sea without knowing what sea he is in, or without knowing where his starting-point is. He could run toward any point of the compass called for, but he could not tell you where nor when you would land, unless you would give him the place of beginning. In like manner, not a surveyor in the world can run a line till you give him the 'place of beginning.' Since surveying has come up, as an illustration, it may be used still further to good advantage. Suppose A and B join lands. They purchased their lands many years ago when lands were cheap, and they were not particular about the lines. But now the lands are worth one hundred dollars per acre. Mr. A is looking at a fine spring near where the line is supposed to be, and noticing the crystal water as it ripples over the pebbles below. He also views a magnificent row of apple trees and a valuable fence, and thinks if the line were run correctly the spring, trees and fence would be on his land. He talks about it to his neighbors, and those who agree with him he regards as very intelligent people, much better and more desirable associates than those who differ from him. Indeed, those who differ from him he considers not very good people, and does not seek their company. Mr. B esteems those who think the spring, the trees and the fence are on his land, and seeks them for his associates. Thus the controversy continues for a time; but, finally, they decide to have the controversy settled. To this end they call the surveyor. But on examination, the surveyor fails to find a cornerstone, a witness-tree, or a landmark of any description on the entire premises. What is now to be done? He refers to his field notes and finds an established corner, it may be, some distance from the line to be run. After surveying, running lines in

different directions, and sundry measurements, he points to a spot and orders the loose soil he sees has been made there to be removed. When this is done they find the corner stone, with the landmarks on it, corresponding to his field notes. He plants his staff at 'the place of beginning,' places the compass on it, the needle settles, and he is now ready to take a look through the compass. A and B are no idle spectators, but are looking on with intense interest. No danger of either becoming drowsy now, though they may be first-class sleepers in church. Mr. B slips up, and peeps through the compass, and perceives that his spring, trees and fence are about to be cut off. Under much excitement and not in a very pleasant manner he turns to the surveyor and exclaims, 'It is all wrong, sir.' The surveyor inquires deliberately, 'What makes you think so?' He replies, with much feeling, 'Why, do you not see that you are about to cut off my fine spring, my fruit trees and fence?' How much attention do you suppose a surveyor would give to such talk? About as much as a gospel preacher would give to the man who thinks the gospel line wrong because it cuts off his church. He would probably tell him that he should have built his fence and planted his fruit trees on the other side of the line, and that he will run the line according to law, as he is bound by oath to do, if it cuts off his house and barn into the bargain.

"'But,' shouts a man, 'what would you do, when the gospel line is run, if you should find yourself on the wrong side of the line?' Simply as the man did who had his land run off, and found his cabin was on the wrong side of the line; he moved *over the line*, on to the *right side*, and on to *his own land*..... If you make a mistake in roads, and go a wrong road for several miles, it is unpleasant to turn and go back to where you got off of the road, but it is much wiser and better to do it than to continue on in the wrong road. Who will not admit that Luther did better, in turning, than he would have done to have continued in Romanism? The matter of *turning* all depends upon the question whether you are right or not. If you are right, then by all means never turn. If you are not right, then turn, and the sooner the better."

—Franklin, *Gospel Preacher*, Vol. 1, pp. 245-247.

(2) The church of Christ was founded in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30. It was originally *one body*. After a time a group of churchmen over in Constantinople decided they would write a creed, as a result of which they introduced a certain amount of human opinion into the faith and worship of the church. As time passed, other groups of men wrote other creeds and confessions of faith; and upon these they built so-called "churches." So the process of creed-making and church-building went on, every "church" claiming to be right and on the road to heaven, until to-day we have a multiplicity of these "churches" or "denominations." About a century and a half ago, another group of Spirit-filled men decided this business of church-making to be all wrong; that it perpetuated division and strife; and they proposed to the Christian world to go back and run the old gospel line as it was run on the day of Pentecost. They proposed to go to these human organizations and take out of them all the things which belonged to the original church and to discard all the things which did not belong to the original church; to then put all these things together, just as they were in the beginning; speaking where the Bible speaks, keeping silent where the Bible is silent; and to thus bring about a restoration of the New Testament church in its original unity, in answer to the prayer of Jesus, John 17:20-21. They proposed to go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of the papacy—all the way back to Jerusalem, and thus find and restore the church established by the apostles. They invited all disciples of Christ in all denominations, not *to come to them*, but *to go back with them* to original ground. This is the plea which I hold up before you at this time. I offer you

nothing but the Bible. I offer you the church for which Jesus shed His own precious blood. I plead with you to forsake the things which divide, to come now and identify yourself with those who were called Christians first at Antioch.

VI

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:37-47.

Text: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."
—Acts 4:32.

The church in Jerusalem was unique in the following respects: (1) It was the *first* church of Christ in the world. (2) During its entire history it was under the *personal guidance* and supervision of the *apostles*. It therefore becomes a model for all future ages. (3) As we shall find later, it was unique in its *unity* and *liberality*. (4) It was unique also in the nature of the *problems* which arose soon after it had been established, and in its method of dealing with the same. (5) It was unique in the fact that it was established and flourished in the very heart of Pharisaic Judaism, the first bitter foe of primitive Christianity. (6) It was unique in its *heroism* under persecution and in its evangelistic zeal. The church at Jerusalem was a great church in every respect, and its faith, life and worship become a pattern for all congregations of Christ in all ages.

We shall study the church in Jerusalem under the following captions: 1. Origin; 2 Terms of Membership; 3. Worship; 4. Congregational Life; 5. Problems; and 6. History.

1. *Origin.* Compare Matt. 16:18, John 20:22-23; Luke 24:45-49, Acts 1:1-8. These promises all fulfilled in Acts 2:1-36. The Spirit descends according to promise; the apostles are overwhelmed with divine power; under this inspiration, they preach the facts of the gospel for the first time in the history of the world. Peter's sermon is recorded because to him had been given "the keys of the kingdom," Matt. 16:19, i. e., the authority to state the terms of pardon under the new covenant and to open the door of the church. The burden of Peter's message is that "this Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses." At the close of this sermon, three thousand persons are convicted of sin; they ask what to do to be saved; that are told what to do, by divine authority; they obey immediately and become the charter members of the church of Christ, Acts 2:37-42.

2. *Terms of Membership:* Those who became members of this church

(1) *Believed.* They believed, else they would not have inquired, "What shall we do?" Acts 2:37.

(2) *Repented*, v. 38.

(3) *Were baptized*, vv. 38, 41. (a) Note that they who *received* the Word were baptized. The Word must be received into an honest and good heart before it will be *obeyed*, Luke 8:15 (b) Were they immersed? Most certainly, for the simple reason there was no other action known as baptism in New Testament times but immersion, Rom. 6:3-6, Col. 2:12. (c) Where was sufficient water in which to immerse three thousand people? Geikie says: "In Jerusalem and vicinity there were eleven large pools." The water to supply the city was brought by aqueducts over a distance of forty miles.

Josephus tells us that the pool of Solomon was of sufficient size and depth to sustain the biggest of ships. Prof. McGarvey, who visited Jerusalem, states that one of these pools covered three acres. (6) How could Peter have immersed three thousand people in one day? The Bible doesn't say that Peter baptized them. There were twelve apostles there, counting Matthias, Acts 1:26, 2:14. In all probability, the *seventy* were there, Luke 10:1. This would give us eighty-two authorized administrators of Christian baptism. If the twelve did the baptizing, each would have baptized 250 people. They had six hours in which to do it, from noon to six o'clock, or, nine hours from the time Peter began to preach. If the 82 did the baptizing, each would have baptized only a fraction over 36 people, and all three thousand could have been immersed in 36 minutes. We know there were one hundred and twenty disciples there, Acts 1:15. Moreover, in New Testament times, every Christian was a priest, fully qualified to baptize others, 1 Pet. 2:5. The disciples were "in great favor" with the people and no one could have prevented their using the pools, Acts 2:47. It is known that thousands have been baptized in one day. On the 16th of April, 404 A. D., Chrysostom immersed 3,000 people, in Constantinople. There is no evidence whatever to disprove the fact that the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost were immersed. The evidence is all favorable to immersion.

3. *Worship.* Their congregational worship consisted of four items:

(1) *The apostles' teaching*, which was inspired, Acts 2:4, and authoritative, John 20:22-23. As the apostles were there in person, their teaching was *oral.* To-day we have the apostles' teaching embodied in the New

Testament in *written* form. The apostles' teaching, or the New Testament, is a sufficient book of discipline for every local congregation to-day, just as it was sufficient for the Jerusalem church. Human creeds and interpretations are unnecessary and divisive.

(2) *Fellowship.* Note that the Greek word, *koinonia*, used here, is rendered, "contribution," in Rom. 15:26. In 2 Cor. 8:4, it is referred to as "the fellowship in the ministering to the saints." The marginal rendering, which is probably correct, has it: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles teaching and *in fellowship*." This particular fellowship was that of the contribution and distribution of earthly goods, Acts 2:44-45. Offering of substance was a voluntary, though essential, part of their worship.

(3) *The breaking of bread*, i. e., the Lord's Supper, or the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The words of Jesus in Matt. 26:29 and Mark 14:25 were fulfilled on Pentecost.

(4) *Prayers.* Prayer has been, from the very beginning, an essential part of church worship. Acts 2:42.

4. *Congregational Life.* There are some striking characteristics of the Jerusalem church to which we call attention, as follows:

(1) *Its rapid growth.* (a) Three thousand were added to the apostles the first day, Acts 2:41. The number was increased to five thousand men, not including women, and children of accountable age, on the day following, Acts 4:4. In other words, it must have had about ten thousand members within two or three days after Pentecost. This number grew by thousands and thousands as the days passed—"multitudes were added," Acts 5:14. (b) Practically all the people present had known

as a matter of fact the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. They were there from all parts of the world to keep the feast of Pentecost. They knew His body had been buried in Joseph's tomb. Now it was quite evident *that the tomb was empty.* No doubt all Jerusalem was visiting this empty tomb, which was convincing evidence of Peter's message that He had risen from the dead, Acts 2:32, 36. They knew quite well His disciples could not have stolen the body; they knew His enemies wanted the body to stay in the tomb; there was nothing left for them to do but to accept Peter's declaration of His resurrection from the dead *as a fact.* (c) The apostles' message was accompanied and established by supernatural demonstrations, Acts 2:43; 5:12-16. These miracles proved the divine authority of message and messengers, Heb. 2:4. No wonder the Jerusalem church soon attained a membership of many thousands!

(2) *Its marvelous unity.* "The multitude.....were of *one heart and soul,*" Acts 4:32. We have here a perfect pattern of Christian unity. God began His work in this dispensation by bringing into existence one congregation of thousands of members *perfectly united in Him and in itself.* We can never have such unity again until we have just such local congregations. Would you not travel many miles to see a church of from fifty thousand to one hundred thousand members all of whom are of one heart and soul—perfectly united in Christ and among themselves? No wonder this church made such rapid strides! Disunity is the greatest obstacle to the onward march of the gospel.

(3) *Its wondrous liberality.* "They had all things common"—Acts 4:32. (a) This church was composed of Jews from all parts of the world who were in Jerusalem

only temporarily. On accepting the gospel message, they were loath to return to their homes at once, but lingered to enjoy their new-found fellowship. This created an emergency. These Jewish Christians could no longer expect entertainment from orthodox Jews; therefore they had to turn to their own brethren, who responded with absolute unselfishness. (b) To meet this emergency, they sold their possessions and brought the money to the apostles for proper distribution as each brother or sister had need, Acts 2:44-45. (c) This manifestation of liberality was purely *voluntary*. It was the natural outpouring of Christian love in their hearts; it was fellowship in ministering to the saints. (d) "This was simply Christian liberality arising to meet an emergency. It was no essential part of the fundamental law of Christian being. It has been repeated hundreds of times in the development of Christian history. It will continue to be a phenomenon relating itself to Christian conduct. Wherever the need is great, there Christian hearts will overflow in a liberality that will meet the need." (Brandenberg, *Philosophy of Christian Being*, p. 136). There is no foundation for the doctrines of communism in this incident.

(4) *Its aggressiveness*. Acts 4:1-22, 5:17-42, 8-1:3, etc. Persecution only served to intensify evangelistic zeal; and when the church was scattered by Saul's vicious attacks, the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. This was really a church "on fire for Christ."

5. *Its Early Problems*. We must not think this congregation was without its problems. It had them. Yet, even in its methods of meeting these problems, it was a model church.

(1) *The problem of hypocrisy.* The church in Jerusalem was made up of human material; and this human element soon manifested itself. (a) The story of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11. (b) The sin committed by this man and wife was not wholly in their manifestation of covetousness, although covetousness was the root of it. They were under no divine obligation to dispose of all their property. They could have kept part of it, no doubt, had they expressed such a desire. Their sin was hypocrisy. They attempted to present the *appearance* of having acted in harmony with the rest of the brethren; and in so doing, they acted and told a lie, v. 3. (c) Note the *discipline* administered by the apostle. It was a miracle for a special purpose, viz., to demonstrate God's attitude towards hypocrisy. The hypocrite will meet eternal condemnation just as truly as the alien sinner. (d) Note also the *effect* of this discipline. "Great fear," i. e., *respect*, "came upon the whole church and upon all that heard these things." The apostles were not criticized because of their administration of discipline; on the contrary the spiritual tone of the church was strengthened, and the church itself received the respect of the entire community.

(2) *The problem of the daily ministrations.* The majority of the members of this church were Jews, i. e., Jews born at home. Some, however, were Grecian Jews, or Jews born abroad. Acts 6:1-7. Between these two classes there was, everywhere, alienation and jealousy. So there arose within the church a "murmuring" of the Grecian Jews against the native Jews. The complaint was that the widows of the Grecian Jews were being neglected in the daily ministrations. A fine opportunity here for a general quarrel! Note what

happened. The apostles called the congregation together and proposed that seven men be set apart to look after these temporal affairs. This meeting was probably held in Solomon's Porch. The people acquiesced immediately, and seven *deacons* were chosen. (a) Note that the apostles did not even *appoint* these seven men. They were elected *out of* the congregation, *by* the congregation, Acts 6:3-5. (b) Note the qualifications: "seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom." (c) Note the fact that the seven men elected wore Grecian names. Evidently there was not a native Hebrew among them. This means that the native Hebrews, though greatly in the majority, selected these seven men from the minority group; in other words, they smothered the objections of the minority under a deluge of generosity! A fine example for all Christian congregations where troubles arise!

(3) *The problem of circumcision.* This was a *theological* one. Circumcision had been a religious ordinance among the Jews for more than thirteen hundred years. How natural, then, that these Jewish disciples should conclude that *circumcision should precede Christian baptism*, as a condition of entrance into the church! Acts 15:1-5. The result was the calling of a conference of the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem. No doubt this conference was attended by practically the entire church. In the course of the discussion, Peter argued that the Gentiles had been granted the privileges of the new covenant on the same terms as Jews; that the Gentiles knew nothing of the practice of circumcision, which was a Jewish ordinance pure and simple; therefore, why should such a yoke be imposed upon the necks of the disciples, for if usage demanded the circumcision of Jewish Christians

consistency would also require the circumcision of Gentile Christians. Acts 15:6-11. It was then decided that circumcision was not one of the requirements of the gospel, but that it had been abrogated along with the remainder of the Mosaic law. As the church had the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit during this period, the Spirit saw to it that a correct decision was reached on this mooted question.

(4) *The problem of racial and religious prejudice.* Great as this church was, it was hampered from the very outset by age-old prejudices and traditions based largely upon racial and religious differences. In spite of the universal scope of the great commission, Matt. 28:19, the gospel was preached only to Jews for many years after Pentecost. It required a special miracle to convince Peter that he should go down to Caesarea and preach the gospel to the Gentile centurion, Cornelius, and his household, Acts 10:9-23. With some hesitancy Peter accepted the responsibility, but to protect himself took six Jewish brethren along with him. But when these seven men saw that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon Cornelius and his household in the same manner that He had overwhelmed the apostles on Pentecost, all doubts were dispelled; and Peter thereupon opened the door of the church to Gentiles. Acts 10:34-48. On returning to Jerusalem, the brethren of the church took him to task for preaching to the uncircumcised. Peter rehearsed his experiences, with the result that a great light dawned upon them and they glorified God that He had granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life, Acts 11:1-18. Thus the middle wall of partition was broken down, Eph. 2:14-16, and age-old religious prejudices and hatreds were dissipated in the peace that

passeth understanding. So far as we know this question was never raised again in the Jerusalem church. With the members of that church the word of God was superior to all prejudices, traditions and inheritances.

6. *Its History.* The church in Jerusalem was also a model of stedfastness under persecution. Its history covered only about thirty-four years. Yet in that time it underwent several persecutions.

(1) In the first persecution, Peter and John were seized and dragged like criminals before the Sanhedrin. After an exciting trial the day following, they were dismissed with the injunction not to teach nor preach in the name of Jesus. Acts 4.

(2) In the second, all the apostles were arrested and confined over night in the common prison. They were tried, but were not released until each had been tied to the whipping post and given forty stripes save one on the naked back. Acts 5.

(3) The third persecution was a general attack. Armed men moved through the streets and arrested every believer that could be found, until the dirty prisons were all filled with Christians. Saul of Tarsus was the leader of this attack, in which Stephen lost his life. Acts 6:8—8:4. The word for flight was given. Fleeing disciples pressed through every gate of the city. They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.

(4) The fourth persecution was planned and executed by Herod. It was aimed at the apostles. The apostle James was seized and coolly beheaded. Peter was cast into prison, from which he was delivered in a wonderful demonstration of Providence. Acts 12:1-24. During all

this time, however, "the word of God grew and multiplied."

(5) Of the fifth and last persecution we have no record in the New Testament. Josephus gives a brief account of it. The time was between the death of Festus and the arrival in Judea of his successor. In this persecution, James, the Lord's half-brother, was murdered.

Finally the time came for this marvelous and historic church to close its career. It had set an example in everything for all time to come—in unity, in liberality, in tolerance, in loyalty, in zeal, in physical and moral courage. So, like thousands of other congregations have done, it passed from the stage of history. The time came when the rebellious Jews stirred up an insurrection against Rome. The armies which had conquered the world were defied by a handful of fanatics. As the Roman legions began to surround the doomed city, the disciples, in obedience to the Lord's command uttered before His death, made a hasty flight and the Jerusalem church was no more. Its enemies had not been able to kill it, but it died, as it had lived, in obedience to the Lord. It was born in glory—it died in glory. It was born in unity—it died in unity. It was born in loyalty—it died in loyalty. No doubt that among those who made hasty flight from Jerusalem to escape the vengeance of Titus were many survivors of the memorable experiences of Pentecost!

God grant that the like of this church may be reproduced upon this earth again, and that thousands like it may dot the surface of the whole earth! When this happens, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas!

VII

IS THERE ANYTHING IN A NAME?*

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:1-11.

Text: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

—Col. 3:17.

This is a sermon on "churchology." One of the pet statements bandied about by those who would defend denominationalism is, "There isn't anything in a name." The purpose of this sermon is to ascertain what *God has said* on the subject of the name; what *you or I may think* about it amounts to nothing if God has spoken.

It is my intention to be practical throughout this discussion; indeed I fear I may be too practical for some. I shall deal with actual conditions. I presume there are in my audience people who are affiliated with denominational bodies, and are known as Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc. It is not my intention to ridicule their faith. Whenever I shall use

*The three sermons, "Is There Anything In a Name?" "Is One Church As Good As Another?" and "The Case of Apollos," should be preached consecutively. The author is indebted to Evangelist J. Roy Wright for much of the argument presented in these three sermons, which may be found in another form in his excellent book, *Systematic Personal Work*.

such terms as "the Lutheran Church," "the Methodist Church," etc., I shall do so, not in the spirit of ridicule, but to make myself clearly understood. I pray that those who hear this argument may receive it in the same spirit of sincerity.

Argument: 1. *Denominationalism defined.* The Christian world of to-day is confronted, not with a theory, but an *actual condition.* In every community, there are different bodies of people, all professing to be Christians, all singing practically the same hymns, all praying to the same God in the name of the same Mediator, all fervent in spirit and earnest in zeal, and all animated by the same Christian ideals of life; yet worshipping in different chapels, and separated from one another by denominational walls of human origin. This is not theory nor speculation, but an honest statement of the condition that actually exists. I propose to treat this condition in a practical way. The condition itself may be termed *sectarianism*, or *denominationalism.*

2. *The attitude of Jesus towards division.* The question now arises, Is this condition pleasing to the Lord? Has Jesus said anything on the subject? In the seventeenth chapter of John's narrative of the gospel the real Lord's prayer is recorded, the one which He prayed Himself, not that which He taught His disciples to pray. After praying for the sanctification of His apostles, He says: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me," John 17:20-21. An analysis of this prayer reveals the following truths:

(1) He prayed that all who believe on Him through the apostles' word *may be one.* This includes all believers in Christ in all ages, as we have no other evidence to convince us that He is the Christ except the apostles' testimony. John 20:30-31; Acts 2:42, 16: 31-33; Rom. 10:14-17.

(2) He prayed that this oneness might be of such a nature as that existing between the Father and Himself. This would be oneness of plan, purpose, effort and relationship. This would not be a unity arrived at by mutual compromise and concession, but a unity achieved by the complete surrender of individual will to the divine Will; in other words, a unity consummated by bringing all believers *into Christ* in the Scriptural way. Rom. 8:1; Gal. 3:27. Such a oneness would necessarily include unity of faith, practice and worship.

(3) This prayer teaches that such a oneness can be attained when believers are brought into personal relationship with God, through Christ, in the divinely appointed way. Rom. 10:9-10, 2 Cor. 7:10, Gal. 3:27, 2 Cor. 5:17. "That they may be (one) in us" is the nature of the unity for which Jesus prayed. We can readily see that such a unity is not achieved by any "league of denominations;" it can be realized only in the organic unity of all disciples in the *faith and worship outlined in the New Testament.*

(4) It is also quite evident that such a oneness must be *visible.* Someone may say, "But we are already one. We may have denominations on earth, but we are one in faith and shall be united in heaven." Jesus prayed that we may be one, however, that the world may believe. A unity that will convince the world must be a visible unity. If the *world* is won for Christ, denominationalism

must go, and all disciples must become one in the faith and worship authorized by the New Testament.

(5) The purpose of this oneness is "*that the world may believe.*" Jesus knew quite well that a divided body would be ineffective in winning the world to His standard. Hence He has left this prayer on the divine record that His disciples may know His will in the matter. We must admit that Christianity has thus far failed to convert the world, and that the reason lies in its divisions and humanisms. John R. Mott has rightly said, "The price that has been paid for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world."

(6) Think what power would be exerted in this community if there were just one church body, meeting in one chapel, with the divine system of faith and worship, and with the assembled talent of the community utilized for Christ! Someone may argue that I am picturing an impossibility; that men can never be brought to such genuine agreement. If this be true, Jesus prayed for an impossibility! Moreover if the unity for which Jesus prayed is impossible, it will be so because men make it impossible by their prejudices and their obstinacy. Be that as it may, the fact remains that such an ideal of unity has been set before us by the Lord, and we cannot be loyal disciples of Him unless we earnestly strive to achieve the ideal.

(7) It becomes quite plain, after analyzing this prayer, that any one who seeks to perpetuate denominationalism is acting in direct opposition to the will of Christ. The condition existing at the present time is the direct antithesis of that for which Christ prayed. Those who are responsible, therefore, for maintaining partyism must be held accountable in the judgment.

(8) To illustrate, the church is the body of Christ, Eph. 1:23. Suppose someone should attack you, tear off an arm, break a bone, punch out an eye, or mangle a limb, would your body be as powerful in such a condition as in its present state of health? No. Neither can the body of Christ be powerful when rent by denominationalism.

3. *The question of name as related to division.* It is very clear that Jesus would have the church to be one body; that denominationalism is a waste of time, talent and energy. Let us now be practical. Suppose the different church bodies in this community should decide to unite. Suppose, again, that you were to be placed on a committee to formulate the plan of union. I am picturing an event that is happening in many communities at the present time. What would be the first question this committee would be compelled to consider? Strange to say it would not be any such question as, for instance, foreordination, the operation of the Holy Spirit, or even baptism. It would be: *What shall be the name of this united church?*

At this point a clear-cut issue intervenes: *Has God already provided a name for His church and His people?* If so, it is not within the province of any committee of men to change that name or to select another? Men have no authority in matters wherein God has spoken. Or, *Has God left the matter of naming His church and His people to the people themselves?* If so, your committee would have a perfect right to select any name upon which all may be agreed. To settle this issue an appeal to the Scriptures becomes necessary.

Acts 15:18. There is something in the Scriptures known as "the eternal purpose" of God. Eph. 1:4-12,

2:8-12; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 13:8. This eternal purpose, or plan, was to send Jesus Christ "in the fulness of time," to establish the church, publish the gospel, and unite Jews and Gentiles in one body of Christ. Knowing that God purposed from "the foundation of the world" to ultimately establish a church, with His Son as its divine Head, we inquire if *God has also preordained a name for His people who constitute this church.* In other words, did God plan and establish a church, without naming His church and His people? We shall go to the Old Testament to ascertain if He preordained a name for His people, and to the New Testament to ascertain if He gave them that name.

4. *The teaching of the Old Testament regarding the name.* Read Isa. 65:15, 56:5, 62:2, and Amos 9:11-12. These prophetic statements reveal the following truths:

(1) That God would cast off the Jews and call His people by a *new name*, and this name would be a curse unto His "chosen." Undoubtedly the name of Christ fulfills this prophecy. The Jew is the world's "man without a country;" he does not have a flag which he can call his own.

(2) That "the mouth of the Lord" should bestow this name, i. e., by *inspiration.*

(3) That God would give a "place" and a "name" to all His saints in future ages. The "place" referred to is explained by 1 Tim. 3:15 and Rom. 16:16.

(4) That this name would be better than the names of sons and daughters, i. e., better than all human names, in the fact that it would be bestowed upon children of God, John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:14-17.

(5) That it would be an everlasting name that would not be cut off.

(6) That it would be bestowed upon the Gentiles first, in the day in which God would raise up the tabernacle of David which had fallen into ruins.

5. *The teaching of the New Testament regarding the name.*

(1) *Acts 11:26.* The gospel was preached only to Jews for several years following Pentecost. It required a special vision to convince Peter that the great commission included Gentiles as well as Jews, Acts 10 and 11. Cornelius and his household were the first Gentiles of the household of faith. In Acts 15:14 we are told that God *first* visited the Gentiles "to take out of them a people for his name," and the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12 is quoted verbatim immediately following this statement, showing that the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" was a prophetic reference to the establishment of the church. Now if God visited the *Gentiles first* to take out of them a people for His name, when and where did this occur? *The church at Antioch was the first Gentile church, and it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians."* Moreover, the prophet stated that the "mouth of the Lord" should bestow this divine name; therefore it follows that the name was given through the inspired teaching and authority of Paul and Barnabas, which explodes the theory that it was bestowed in derision by the enemies of Christianity. Thus Scripture harmony proves that the name "Christian" was preordained and bestowed as the divine name for God's people. The fact that the name was to be given to the Gentiles first also explains why it is that the name is not to be found in *Acts of Apostles* until we take up the history of the Antioch church. Note that the

disciples were not called "Lutherans," "Methodists," etc., but "Christians," meaning "of Christ."

(2) *Acts 26:28.* Agrippa was almost persuaded to become, not a Presbyterian, nor a Methodist, nor a Baptist, nor anything of the kind. Such names were unknown at that time.

(3) *2 Pet. 4:16.* If we suffer as Lutherans, whose name is glorified? The name of Martin Luther. If we suffer as Congregationalists, the *congregation* gets the glory; if as Presbyterians, the *presbytery* is glorified; if as Baptists, the act of *baptism;* if as Episcopalians, the *episcopacy.* If we suffer as Christians, however, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified.

(4) *Col. 3:17,* the words of our text. Someone says, "Why all this argument? Are not Baptists, Methodists, etc., Christians?" True, they profess to be, and no doubt they are if they have complied with the Scriptural terms of pardon and are leading the Christian life. But if they wish to be known as Christians, why do they not stop with that? Why do they impose human names upon the divine name? Why do they inscribe upon the corner-stones of their chapels such designations as "Methodist Church," "Baptist Church," "Presbyterian Church," etc.? If the Lord were to walk the streets of the average city today would He be able to locate His own church by the designations to be found on church architecture? Suppose the Masons were to dump a ton of coal into some poor widow's bin; who would receive the credit? The Masonic fraternity, of course. If the Lutheran Church were to do it whose name would be honored? The name of Luther. But suppose the church of Christ were to do it, whose name would be glorified? The name of Christ. Denomina-

tionalism is absolutely blind to the admonition of our text.

(5) *Phil. 2:9-11.* God has given His Son a name which is "above every name." Did not the prophet state that this divine name would be better than the names of sons and daughters? Is it not, then, better than all human names; better than the name of Luther, Calvin, Wesley or Campbell?

(6) *2 Cor. 11:2, Rev. 21:2.* Christ is the Bridegroom; the church is the Bride. What would people think of a bride who would insist upon wearing some other man's name in preference to that of her husband? Is it not dishonoring Christ when His bride, the church, voluntarily assumes and wears a human name instead of His own divine name?

(7) *Eph. 3:14-15,* Authorized Version. The church of Christ is God's family. The name "Christian" is the family name.

(8) *Gal. 4:26.* Christ is the Bridegroom and the church is the Bride. To this spiritual union we are born as babes in Christ, 1 Pet. 2:2. Naturally we would be little "Christ-ians." A congregation of such Christians constitutes a "church of Christ," Rom. 16:16.

(9) *Acts 4:12.* We should wear the name of Christ because there is salvation in no other name.

(10) *Acts 15:17.* The name of Christ is called upon every penitent believer in the formula of Christian baptism, Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:38. It is the specific act in which we assume the divine name with its obligations.

(11) *Rev. 22:3-4.* If we wear the divine name here, and wear it upon our foreheads hereafter, it will surely be an everlasting name that shall not be cut off, as the prophet stated.

(12) *Rev. 2:13, 3:8.* Is there nothing in a name? Jesus spoke words of affection and commendation to the churches in Pergamum and Philadelphia because they kept His *name* and His *word*. *What church body in this community wears the name of Christ exclusively, and keeps His word as a sufficient guide in religious faith and practice?* To ask this question is to answer it.

Closing Illustrations:

(1) "If the church is the bride of Christ, the bride must have been the same as the bridegroom. If the church is the body of Christ, she must have the same name as her head. It would be strange if my body and my head should bear different names. In some comments on the passage, 'The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch,' it is held that this name was given in derision. I think not. If you study the use of the Greek word, 'called', you will conclude that they were divinely called Christians. God gave them that name. Jesus speaks about rich men blaspheming that 'beautiful name by which you are called.' " (A. J. Gordon, Baptist, in *Select Northfield Sermons*). "I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last forever." (*Spurgeon Memorial Library*, Vol. 1., p. 168). "I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul (1 Cor. 1:13) would not that any should call themselves of Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How, then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after Him from whom our doctrine comes." (Stork, *Life of Luther*, p. 289). John Wesley (Methodist): "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of the common Master, to hear His word, to imbibe His

spirit, and to transcribe His life into our own." Alexander Campbell: "But, alas, the enemies have blasphemed the blessed gospel by pasting our sinful names upon it to bring it into disrepute."

(2) "A preacher one time, in a revival, clapped his hands and shouted, 'Thank God, there is nothing in a name! nothing in a name!' When an old woman in that audience, who had been Scripturally taught, jumped to her feet, clapped her hands and shouted, 'Glory to Beelzebub, the prince of devils,' the preacher and the congregation were shocked, and he immediately rebuked her for giving glory to Beelzebub. But she said, 'You say there is nothing in a name. Glory to Beelzebub, the prince of devils.' The preacher's mouth was closed."—Book, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II., p. 14.

(3) "It is told of Sister Taubman, who was a member of the First Church in Augusta, Ga., that a minister of a sectarian church came to her soliciting help to liquidate a debt against their building. She told him she could not contribute money to the spread of sectarianism, but he answered: 'There is nothing in a name; we are all striving for the same end'. She then wrote out her check for a thousand dollars and handed it to the preacher, and with a heart full of joy he quickly made his way to the bank for the money. The cashier refused to accept the check. 'Why,' said he, 'this was given to me by Mrs. Taubman and her credit is good.' The cashier replied, 'Her name is not signed to the check.' The preacher examined it and found that she had signed the name of her servant. He went back to Sister Taubman, told her of her mistake, but she replied, 'There is nothing in a name, so you say, and that check ought to be just as good with the name of my servant on it as my own.' The preacher had a practical demonstration of the inconsistency of his argument"

—Book, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II., p. 14.

(4) Two gentlemen were having a very interesting altercation, in the course of a journey on a slow train through Missouri, regarding the matter of the name. One argued strenuously that the name counts for nothing, and the other was contending just as earnestly that the name is important. An evangelist, sitting across the aisle, was listening with consid-

erable enjoyment. Finally, one of the men, in a moment of excitement, turned to the evangelist, and exclaimed, "Brother I tell you, there's nothing in a name!" The evangelist, looking at him very calmly, replied after a moment's pause, "You're a liar!" The other became very indignant and cried out, "Sir, what do you mean by insulting me in this manner?" To which the evangelist replied, "Why are you so insulted? I might just as well have called you a gentleman as a liar. But what's the difference? There's nothing in a name, anyway." Needless to say, the discussion terminated.

(5) It was Shakespeare who made Juliet to say,

"What's in a name? A rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."

This sentiment might be expected from a love-sick girl, but surely not from an intelligent, thinking person. I read recently an advertisement of a chiropractor in a little town in Missouri, and his name was "W. R. Twist." Yet people will say there isn't anything in a name!

If we are eternally saved, we shall be saved in the name of Christ. His is the only name which has any credit at the Bank of Heaven. So, in that divine name, let us turn to God for mercy. Let us come, singing,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the Cross I cling."

Coming in this spirit, we shall find that God abundantly pardons.

VIII

IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

Scripture Reading: Eph.4:1-16.

Text: "There is one body....."—Eph. 4:4.

Among the popular platitudes we hear on every side to-day are the following: "There isn't anything in a name." "One church is as good as another." "It makes no difference what church one belongs to just so one is sincere." "I think I ought to be a member of *some* church." "The church really makes no difference, as we are all trying to get to the same heaven," etc. These are bits of "pious profanity" which fall from the lips of the uninformed. They indicate absolute lack of religious conviction and speak eloquently of the shallowness which exists in religious thinking and life at the present time. One who knows the New Testament will not be heard making such statements.

From our preceding sermon on the name, we learned the following truths:

(1) That God preordained a new name for His people under the new covenant, and that this name was bestowed upon the Gentiles first, at Antioch, under the inspired teaching of Paul and Barnabas.

(2) That all disciples of Christ should wear this new and divine name, "Christian," and no other, as a religious designation.

(3) That it is the only name "under heaven given among men" wherein we must be saved, Acts 4:12.

(4) That the condition prevailing in Christendom at the present time is that of division and partyism.

(5) That this condition is the direct antithesis of the will of our Lord as expressed in His intercessory prayer, John 17:20-21.

(6) That this condition has been brought about by the introduction of human dogmas and practices, and by the wearing of human names in preference to the divine name. The name, "Christian," is a *general* name. All Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc., claim to be Christians, and would be insulted if told they were not Christians. It requires, therefore, a *particular* name, to indicate a denomination. When one group of disciples take a particular name, as, for example, the name "Lutheran," to distinguish themselves from another group who have taken another particular name, such as "Methodists," then we have denominationalism. As long as these *particular*, or distinguishing, names are worn by different groups of disciples, there will be division and strife. It follows that if the *general* name, "Christian," were universally and exclusively worn by all disciples, Christian unity would soon follow.

(7) That human names are the greatest walls of division between the followers of Christ to-day. Many people are the same in religion as in politics. They are Democrats, because their parents were Democrats, or Republicans because their parents were Republicans. In like manner, they are Lutherans because their parents were Lutherans, etc. The dropping of all human names by the people of God would be a long step in the direction of that unity for which Jesus prayed.

(8) That such a unity must be achieved before the world can possibly be won to Jesus Christ. The

greatest obstacle in the pathway of the onward march of the gospel at the present time is a divided Christendom.

With these truths established, we shall now attempt to discuss the following propositions:

(1) How did these divisions arise? Give one a New Testament and it will make one a Christian and nothing more. The New Testament will certainly not make Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc., as these designations are not to be found in the New Testament.

(2) Is this divided condition a sin in the sight of God? We are not interested in what people *think* about this question; we are concerned only about what God has *said* regarding it. We shall accept without question the teaching of the New Testament.

(3) If division is a sin, who shall be held accountable for this sin in the day of judgment?

(4) Can the original unity of the church be restored; and if so, how?

(5) Is one church as good as another?

(6) If prejudice and sectarianism blind the eyes and ears of people so that they will not forsake denominationalism and unite in Christ, is there a position which is infallibly safe and right under all circumstances?

(7) If there are those to-day who hold an undenominational position and wear the name "Christian" only, what shall be their attitude towards those who belong to denominational bodies?

Argument: In the course of Paul's second missionary journey, he, with his helpers, preached the gospel and established a church in the city of Corinth, in Greece. This was the church of Christ, or church of God, at Corinth, Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 1:2. In the beginning,

this was *one* body—the church at Corinth. As time passed, however, and when the apostle had moved on to other fields, the church at Corinth became very corrupt in different ways. False teachers arose who attempted to confuse the gospel with their philosophies and speculations; social evils crept into the church; the members of the church abused their Christian liberty by acts which brought criticism upon them from the outside world; the Lord's Supper was turned into a sort of a pagan orgy; and some of the disciples were even denying the bodily resurrection of the dead. Among all these evils, and underlying them, was a still greater one, viz., the church became divided into factions and sectarian strife was engendered. The facts regarding these conditions reached the ears of Paul, while he was in Ephesus, and in order to correct them, he wrote an epistle and sent it back by a delegation of three men to the church at Corinth. This letter is known to-day as the *First Epistle to the Corinthians.*

An investigation of this epistle reveals the fact that the first evil which the apostle sought to correct was *partyism.* The first three chapters are devoted almost entirely to the question of *division and its causes.* (Remember that Paul writes by the authority of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:1-5, 14:37.). Let us analyze this portion of the First Corinthian letter briefly.

1. *1. Cor. 1:10.* Note the two-fold *appeal:* (1) To the brethren, themselves—"I beseech you." (2) To the authority of Christ—"through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Note also the *objective* sought: (1) "That ye all speak the same thing;" (2) "that there be no divisions among you;" (3) that "ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

"In the same *mind*" implies unity of *faith* and *purpose;* "in the same judgment," unity of *decision* and *action.* Occasionally we hear people say, "The Lord never expected people to see alike in all things." Quite true. The Lord never expected people to be in absolute agreement on all things. The only place where there are no differences is the cemetery. *But the Lord certainly does expect His people to be of the same mind and the same judgment in matters of faith and practice* and He has given them a Book to guide them into all truth so that they may be united; and the reason why they are not united is in the fact that they will not all follow this Book.

Illustration: Suppose you were to take a parcel to the post-office and ask one of the clerks to weigh it and tell you how much postage will be required to send it through the mails. The clerk throws it on the scales; then he turns to his guide-book, and he tells you it will cost you twenty cents. This is more than you expected to pay, and, thinking the clerk has made some mistake, you withdraw the parcel and take it back home. The next day you call at the post-office a second time, and this time you ask for the assistant postmaster. He takes the parcel, throws it on the scales, consults his guide-book, and he, too, tells you it will cost twenty cents. Still you are not satisfied. The next day you return to the post-office a third time, and you find the postmaster, himself, at the window. He takes your parcel, throws it on the scales, then looks at his guide-book, and informs you it will cost you twenty cents to mail it. You finally conclude that the post-master and his helpers must be correct, and you place the proper amount of postage on the parcel and drop it in the mail. Here were three people who spoke with the same mind and the same judgment. Why? *Because they all had one guide-book and they went by it.* The trouble with Protestants is that, while they all have and acknowledge one guide-book, *they will not go by it;* they insist on adding creeds and "interpretations" of their own. The logical result is division. Paul's specific command is that there be no divisions among Christians.

2. *Verses 11-12.* Here we find the source of their divisions. In the beginning there was one body at Corinth, and its members were called Christians. As time went by some said, "We like the gospel the way Paul preached it," and they called themselves "of Paul," i. e., "Paulites," or "Paulite" Christians. Others, under the spell of the eloquence of Apollos, said, "We prefer the gospel as Apollos preaches it," and called themselves "Apollosites" or "Apollosite" Christians. Still others argued, "But Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, and it was Peter who first opened the door of the church; therefore, we prefer to follow Peter," and these called themselves "Cephasites," or "Cephasite" Christians. In chapter two of the epistle, we find also that these divisions were accentuated by philosophical speculations which had been introduced into the church. No doubt there were so-called "scholars" who were trying to "harmonize" the gospel message with current philosophies, and the result was confusion. However, there was one group in the church at Corinth who refused to become a party to factional strife. This group said, "You brethren can follow after Paul and Apollos and Peter, if you wish; but we will not do so. We are of Christ. We are just Christians." *This group still maintained the original ground which had been held by the entire church at the time it had been organized.*

In the beginning, there was *one body* at Corinth. At the time Paul wrote his first epistle, there was still the *one* body; but three more had been added. What was the source of these divisions? *Their preferences for their preachers, and theological speculation.* What happened in the local church at Corinth has been repeated on a broader scale in the church universal. In the be-

ginning, there was *one body*, Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4. For three hundred years after Pentecost it was one body. Its members were called Christians, Acts 11:26. As time went on, some said, "We believe the gospel as Luther preached it," and called themselves "Lutherans." Others followed Calvin and Knox and called themselves "Presbyterians," after the presbyterian form of government. Others followed Wesley and accepted the name, "Methodists." Others, because they insisted upon Scriptural baptism, took the name, "Baptists." This process of dividing over matters of theological speculation and church leadership repeated itself so frequently with the passing of the centuries that to-day, instead of *one body*, we have many. This condition has been caused by following the opinions of men; by speculating upon the fine points of Scripture doctrine; and by the introduction of human names and human creeds. The introduction of the *human* element divided the people of God at Corinth; and has been the prolific source of sectarianism in all ages.

3. *Verses 13-17.* At this juncture Paul asks three pointed questions. (1) "Is Christ divided?" Their factions implied a divided Christ, because the church is the body of Christ. (2) "Was Paul crucified for you?" This is addressed to the faction who said they were "of Paul." Paul knew they would have to admit that Christ had been crucified for them, not Paul. The inference is that, as Christ had been crucified for them, they should wear His name. (3) "Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Had Paul been crucified for them, or had they been baptized in Paul's name, they would have been perfectly correct in wearing Paul's name. But they knew quite well they had been bap-

tized in the name of Christ; therefore they should wear His name. Being baptized "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27), "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38) or "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19) are equivalent to one and the same thing—a surrender of the authority of self and the public acceptance of the authority of Christ. The apostle continues: "I thank God I baptized none of you"—i. e., you who call yourselves "Paulites"—"save Crispus and Gaius, lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name." Paul did not consider baptism unnecessary, Rom. 6:4-6, Col. 2:12; in fact, he states that he had baptized some of them, himself, vv. 14, 16. In this particular case, however, he expresses satisfaction that he had not baptized many of them, lest some of his enemies might spread the report that he had baptized in his own name. He says, later, that his duty was not primarily to baptize, but to do the work of an apostle; and as such he permitted his helpers to do most of the baptizing, v. 17.

The same questions apply to-day. Was Luther crucified for you? Were ye baptized in the name of the presbytery, or of the episcopacy, or of the congregation? Were ye baptized in the name of Calvin, or of Wesley, or of Campbell? Certainly not. All Christians have been baptized in the name of Christ, and should wear His name exclusively.

4. *1 Cor. 3:1-9.* After rebuking them for substituting philosophy and speculation for the gospel message, the apostle returns, at the beginning of the third chapter, to their partyism. He does not say, "You brethren all claim to be Christians. You can not be expected to see alike. There isn't anything in a name, and one church

is as good as another." On the contrary, he rebukes them severely for their divisions. He says, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal?" Division, then, is a sign of carnality. In Rom. 8:6-7, we are informed that to be "carnal" is to follow the "mind of the flesh;" to be in a condition of "enmity against God." Sectarianism is enmity against God. "For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not men?" That is, do ye not walk after the manner of men? Those who are carnal do not have the Spirit; they walk as men, Jude 19. May God help Christendom to awaken to a realization of the fact that sectarianism is a sin of the first magnitude, and enmity against God.

The question that arises here is: Who had divided the church at Corinth? There had been one body in the beginning; now there were four. There was one body of "Paulites," another of "Apollosites," and a third of "Cephasites," and there were those who were just Christians as they had been in the beginning. Now, which of the four groups held the right position? The answer is obvious: *Those who occupied original ground.* Their position was undenominational. The divisions had been created by the three groups who had followed human leaders and assumed human names.

Let us modernize this case. In this community, there is one body of "Methodists" (or "Methodist" Christians, if you insist), another body of "Presbyterians," another of "Baptists," etc., yet all claim to be Christians. There is also one body known as a "church of Christ," whose members are known as "Christians." They take the Bible as their only book of discipline and seek to restore the faith and worship of the primitive congregations.

I submit this question to you: *Which group holds the unquestionably right position?* The answer is obvious: Those who occupy New Testament ground. They offer you the divine name, the divine body, the divine baptism, the divine way. Why be satisfied with less than the best in the matter of your soul's salvation? Let others follow human creeds and wear human names if they will, but why should you not resolve here and now that you will wear only the name of Christ and belong only to the body of Christ?

I do not question for a moment that "there are good people in all churches." The fact remains, however, that all those who follow human leaders and wear human names are perpetuating the sin of sectarianism. No amount of goodness nor sincerity can obviate this truth. Human names and human creeds are the greatest walls of division between people of God to-day.

Conclusions: We shall now turn our attention to the interrogations which were stated in the introduction, and shall attempt to answer them in the light of the Scriptures.

(1) How did these divisions arise? *Answer:* Through the introduction of human names and human creeds.

(2) Is division a sin? The Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, states expressly that division is a proof of carnality.

(3) Who shall be held accountable for this sin? Undoubtedly, those who have caused division by their humanisms.

(4) Can the original unity of the church be restored; if so, how? The original unity of the church can be restored when all professing Christians discard everything in their present system of faith and worship that

can not be found in the New Testament. The quickest and surest way to Christian unity is through a complete return to primitive Christianity, its laws, names, ordinances and fruits.

(5) Is one church as good as another? No more so, than one book is as good as another; no more so, than one brand of apples is as good as another. Who would argue such foolishness? Those who are sincere will never be satisfied until they have found that church body which reproduces the faith and practice of that church instituted by the apostles.

(6) Is there a position which is infallibly right under all circumstances? Certainly. It is always right to obey the commands of Christ; to wear the name of Christ; to take His word as a sufficient guide in Christian faith and practice; and to live the life which He requires of His people. In the midst of our present-day denominationalism, those who are Christians only, members of the body of Christ on the terms of the gospel, and consistent in their manner of living, are unquestionably right. They are pursuing a course that is infallibly safe under all circumstances. If others want to be Lutherans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, etc., they have a perfect moral right to do so; but I prefer to be just a Christian, and a member of the church of Jesus Christ. In taking such a position, I know that I am not contributing to the sin of partyism.

(7) What should be the attitude of those who say they are "of Christ" towards members of denominational bodies? I shall discuss this question at length in my next sermon, under the caption, "The Case of Apollos."

In 1 Cor. 3:11, Paul states the true basis of Christian unity. A unity upon any other foundation would not

be *Christian* unity. When we individually believe, repent, confess, and are baptized into Christ, we become members of His body, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:27. When the members of denominational bodies are willing to lay aside human names, creeds and practices, Christian unity will become a reality, but not until then. We need no other name than the divine name, Acts 4:12, Col. 3:17. We need no other book of discipline than the New Testament, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. If the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish one unto all good works, human creeds are unnecessary. If we are eternally saved, we shall be saved, not as Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, etc., but as Christians.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., some years ago, published a booklet in which he gave us a word picture of the church which he would prefer. Now Mr. Harry Emerson Fosdick receives much free publicity telling us what kind of a church he would establish. I have no desire to belong to Rockefeller's church, nor to Fosdick's church, nor to Luther's church, nor to any church established by men. I have no desire to belong to any denomination. My supreme desire is to live and die in the body of Christ, Heb. 12:22-23.

"I love Thy Church, O God,
Her walls before me stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

"Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise."

IX

THE CASE OF APOLLOS

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:24-28.

Text: "But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately."

—Acts 18:26.

In this sermon we shall attempt to answer one question left over from the preceding discourse: If there are those to-day who hold an undenominational position and wear the name "Christian" only, what shall be their attitude towards those who belong to denominational bodies? I shall attempt to reply to this question in harmony with the Scriptures, and in all humility of spirit.

I think I hear someone saying, "There are good people in all churches. Many of them have never fully complied with the terms of pardon, as you preach them. Do you mean to teach they will be eternally lost?" Or, you may object as follows: "My mother was a good woman, and she was a Lutheran. If my mother isn't in heaven, there's no chance for me to get there." I propose to give attention to these objections, which arise largely out of *sentiment*, and shall use the case of Apollos as an illustration.

It has been said that when a case is well stated it is half argued. Permit me, therefore, to state my position clearly.

(1) I frankly admit that "there are good and bad people in all churches." It is possible, however, for the best of people to be mistaken. Religion does not rest upon individual conscience, but upon divine authority. *No man can be certain* that he is reconciled to God until he has complied with the terms of pardon as laid down in the New Testament. Man, as he is, is separated from God and under condemnation, John 3:17-18, Col. 1:21-22. Since God is the offended party, He alone has the right to state the terms upon which He will receive the alien back into covenant relationship with Himself, and the alien sinner must comply with these terms, 2 Cor. 5:18-19, Acts 2:38. Good citizenship, intellectualism, fraternalism, social service, and the like can not be substituted for obedience to the Word, Matt. 7:24-27, 1 John 2:3-6, Rev. 22:14. The only infallibly safe course to pursue is to believe and obey the gospel. It is true that many good people often follow their opinions or early training, without investigating the Scriptures, and may therefore be wrong as regards their relationship to God. Saul of Tarsus was at one time a zealous persecutor of the Christians; later, in reviewing his early career, he says he was the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:12-15. Because a may may *think* he is right is no evidence that he *is* right.

(2) We must admit that all who wear human names and follow human creeds contribute to the sin of division, 1 Cor. 3:3-4. We must also admit that division is contrary to the will and prayer of our Lord, John 17:20-21, and is condemned as an evidence of carnality, by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 3:4, Rom. 8:6-7. Those who perpetuate divisions are said to be carnal and walk as men,

1 Cor. 3:3. People do not seem to comprehend the magnitude of the sin of sectarianism.

(3) We must likewise admit, if we are honest, that all those who live and die in the body of Christ, who wear only the name of Christ, who follow the New Testament as their only book of discipline, and who live consistent Christian lives, are pursuing a course that is unquestionably right under all circumstances.

(4) It is quite evident that one who preaches the gospel of Christ must adhere strictly to a *positive* message. It is the preacher's duty to tell the inquirer what to do to be saved in the words of the inspired apostles and without any elaborate interpretation. Such interpretation is unnecessary. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16:16. Does any human being dare say, "He that believeth and is *not* baptized shall be saved?" Jesus said, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God," John 3:5. *If Jesus says you can not, how can you?* When the multitude of Jews, on Pentecost, asked what they must do, they were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:37-38. It is the preacher's duty to adhere strictly to these inspired commands.

(5) These commands are very clear-cut, so much so that even a child can understand and obey them. It follows that all those who do not obey these commands are without excuse, and are left entirely to the mercy of God. Those who do not even *believe* are judged already, John 3:18. Others who believe to a certain extent, yet allow prejudice to blind their eyes to the truth, are certainly in a precarious state. Wilful ignorance surely

multiplies guilt, 2 Pet. 3:5, Heb. 10:26, Jas. 4:17, 2 Cor. 4:3-4, Matt. 23:37-39.

(6) While we admit that there are good people in all churches, yet we contend that the most of them are uninformed, and have taken little pains to inform themselves. They do not know that division is a sin. They have no conception of an undenominational position. They look at Christianity from a purely denominational point of view, because they have never been informed, Acts 3:17. Paul argues that he obtained mercy from God because his unbelief had been due to ignorance, 1 Tim. 1:13.

(7) My last premise is that the preacher's duty is to tell people what to do to be saved and what to do to keep saved in the words of the New Testament; and if they refuse to do what the Holy Spirit requires, their ultimate acceptance or rejection must be a matter between themselves and their God. It is my duty, also, to warn all disciples against the sin of division. If they persist in their divisions, in spite of my warning, they will have to settle the matter with Him who holds the worlds in the hollow of His hand. If it should turn out in the end that God will save some who have not fully met His requirements, such salvation will not have have come as a result of human obedience to divine will, but would be a special dispensation of His infinite mercy. Why pursue a course so uncertain when there is a way that is safe under all circumstances?

Argument: We shall study the case of Apollos under three captions:

1. *His standing previous to his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla.*

(1) *He was an eloquent man.* So are many Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc., preachers. Perhaps the greatest orator America ever produced was Henry Ward Beecher. Men like Spurgeon, Brooks, Talmadge, Moody, Hillis, Billy Sunday, etc., have been preachers of great pulpit power.

(2) *He was mighty in the Scriptures*, i. e., to the extent of his knowledge. So are many denominational preachers. What wonderful sermons on the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the incarnation, the resurrection, and other fundamentals, have been preached since the days of Luther and Calvin! What great volumes of theology have been written! Apollos was the William Jennings Bryan of the New Testament.

(3) *He was instructed in the way of the Lord.* So are Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc., preachers. They are sent to colleges and seminaries for ministerial preparation.

(4) *He was fervent in spirit*, i. e., in *his own* spirit. So are denominational preachers; so are many good people of all denominations. No one doubts their earnestness and consecration. It may be possible, however, for one to be fervent in spirit, but not according to knowledge, Rom. 10:2. Pure emotionalism, or mysticism, must not be mistaken for Christianity.

(5) *He taught diligently the things of the Lord.* The Revised Version states it, "he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." In like manner we find denominational preachers diligent in their service, and many good people faithful in meeting their denominational requirements.

(6) *He knew only the baptism of John.* Here Apollos was in error. Like a great many denominational

preachers, he was in error on the subject of baptism. With all his learning, eloquence, diligence and zeal, he was wrong on one question. John's baptism had been superseded by Christian baptism, but Apollos did not know it, and was therefore teaching an error. See Acts 19:1-6.

Suppose now, for illustration, that we have Apollos die in this condition. He was eloquent, diligent, fervent in spirit, and true to the knowledge which he possessed; yet he was in error on one subject. He didn't know any better on the matter of baptism. Had he died in this condition, would Apollos have been eternally lost? I have always taken the position that human responsibility is proportionate to spiritual knowledge. Hence I do not say for a moment that all Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., are eternally lost. I leave all judgment with God. I can do nothing more than preach the truth in order that error may be dispelled.

2. *The duty of Aquila and Priscilla to Apollos.* Aquila and Priscilla were two Christians, members of the church of Christ at Ephesus and associates of Paul. When they heard Apollos preaching the baptism of John, what did they do? Did they allow him to go on in his error without attempting to set him right? Certainly not. They took him privately and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. They no doubt explained to him that John's baptism was no longer valid; that it was his duty to baptize all believing penitents in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They set him right on the subject of baptism. Apollos, having "a good and honest heart," was willing to be taught, and immediately corrected his error.

The pioneers of the Restoration movement possessed the firm conviction that they had a message for the denominational world. This conviction lent unusual power to their preaching and the consequence often was that entire congregations would forsake Methodism, Baptist-ism, and other isms, and become just churches of Christ. We to-day seem to have pretty generally lost this conviction. We are preaching the plea with an air of apology. We seem to be willing to compromise the issue and to follow the lines of least resistance. The result is stagnation. Let us return at once to the old-time positive message. Let us never forget that we have a specific duty, like Aquila and Priscilla; and that duty is to teach the way of the Lord more accurately. I make no apology for using every opportunity to exalt the divine name, the divine creed, the divine baptism and the divine way. Some would term the work of Aquila and Priscilla "proselyting;" the Scriptures term it "teaching the way of God more accurately." Every member of every church of Christ in the land should follow the example of these two primitive Christians and become an expounder of the way of God. The denominational world must be informed and awakened before the prayer of our Lord can be answered.

3. *The standing of Apollos after his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla.*

(1) Suppose Apollos had refused to listen to his teachers. Suppose he had closed his heart against them. In this case, he certainly would have been held accountable in the judgment. Wilful ignorance is inexcusable. One who is *intolerant* is one who closes his heart against all truth and refuses to allow the light of Scripture understanding to illumine his soul.

(2) Suppose that Apollos, after the instruction he had received from Aquila and Priscilla, had disregarded it. Suppose he had said, "It doesn't make any difference what you do just so you are sincere. John's baptism is just as good as any other baptism, if you're heart is right. I am willing to leave this matter to each individual to act as conscience directs." This would have been flagrant mishandling of the truth. As an ambassador of Christ, Apollos felt his responsibility. He faced about, corrected his error, and preached the gospel in its fulness and simplicity. Acts 18:28.

My denominational brother or sister, now that you have learned the way of God more accurately and your added knowledge has become a conviction in your soul, where do you stand? Will you be swayed by prejudice? Or, will you be as honest with yourself and with your God as this man Apollos?

Conclusion:

Someone says: "You want us to come your way, into your church." I beg to differ. I have no way to offer you save the way laid out in the New Testament. I have no church. I am not asking you to come to *my* position. I am pleading with you to do as I have done—to return to the New Testament position. I am pleading with you to forsake these divisive names and creeds, and thus do your part in tearing down the walls of division.

You are saying, "My mother was a Lutheran, and what was good enough for her is good enough for me." This may not be true. Because your mother may have been lame is no reason that you should cripple yourself. Your mother, no doubt, lived up to all the Scriptural knowledge she possessed; and if you are as good as your mother, you will live up to all the knowledge you possess. If your knowledge is greater, your responsibility is greater. What saved your mother may not save you.

But you say, "I despise a turncoat." Probably so. Would it not be wiser, however, to face about and put your coat on right, than to persist in wearing it "wrong side out" the rest of your life?

It is said that a Catholic priest once said to Martin Luther, "Luther, don't you think your father and mother are in heaven?" Luther replied, "I hope so. In fact I am confident they are in heaven." The priest then said, "But your father and mother were devout Catholics. If they went to heaven through the Catholic Church, can't you do the same?" To which Luther replied in these convincing words: "Most emphatically, I can not. My parents never read the Bible. They had no Bible to study. They were not permitted to have one. I have a greater knowledge of divine truth than they had the opportunity of acquiring. I must live up to my knowledge. What saved my parents will not save me, because I know better than they."

Brother Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian, if you have heard this sermon, are you convinced? If so, are you not in the same position in which Apollos found himself after his conversation with Aquila and Priscilla? Will you not have the courage *now* to act upon your convictions? Fear not opposition, persecution, nor discouragement. Come to Christ in the spirit of a little child, and do your part in helping to achieve the condition for which He prayed.

X

ARE THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST A DENOMINATION?

Scripture Reading: Rom. 16:17-20.

Text: "All the churches of Christ salute you."—Rom. 16:16.

Introduction: (1) In New Testament times each local congregation of the saints was a church of Christ. For example, there was a church of Christ at Philippi, a church of Christ at Corinth, a church of Christ at Antioch, etc. In our text, Paul speaks of "all the churches of Christ," i. e., in a collective sense.

(2) A *denomination* is a *division*, party, or sect. While certain factions developed early in the history of the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. 1:12-13, yet there were no denominations in the modern sense of the term in New Testament times. The term, "churches of Christ," as found in our text, does not refer to a variety of denominations, but to congregations of the same name, faith, worship and practice. Denominations are the by-products of theology, and have come about in modern times through the addition of human names, creeds and isms.

(3) At the present time there are, in the United States, some seven thousand congregations known as "churches of Christ," commonly called "Christian Churches." As in New Testament times, these congregations (a) require faith, repentance, confession and baptism as terms of admission; (b) have no creed but

Christ, and no book of discipline but the New Testament; (c) meet on each Lord's Day for public worship, which consists of prayer and praise, gospel preaching, the Lord's Supper and the offering of substance, Acts 2:42; (d) have no ecclesiastical organization, but, on the contrary, recognize only the authority of Christ as administered by the apostles and embodied in the New Testament; (e) have no officers except those authorized by the New Testament, viz., elders, deacons and evangelists.

(4) The question of this sermon is: *Are these churches of Christ a denomination?* Or, to be more explicit, is a person who belongs to one of these congregations a member of any denomination? In spite of the division and confusion in the Christian world of to-day, is there an *undenominational* position which the earnest seeker of the truth may find and occupy?

Argument: We shall attempt to answer the above questions:

1. *From the viewpoint of name.* The members of these congregations, or churches of Christ

(1) Wear no *denominational*, (*particular*), name.

(2) Wear only the divine name, "Christian," Acts 11:26. They have no desire to be distinguished from other Christians by any *qualifying*, or sectarian, name.

(3) Are willing to be known by any name that is Scriptural, such as "disciples," Acts 6:1; "brethren," Acts 9:30; "believers," Acts 5:14; "saints," Acts 9:13; "priests," 1 Pet. 2:5, etc. They are not willing, however, that even these common names should be denominationalized. For instance, capitalize the "d" in "disciples," and you have "Disciples," which is a partic-

ular or distinguishing name. The same rule may apply to "brethren," "saints," etc. The only *divine* name is the name, "Christian," which means "of Christ."

(4) Are willing to be known, in a congregational or catholic sense, as "the church," Eph.3:10; "the church of God," 1 Cor. 1:2; "the church of the Lord," Acts 20:28; "the church of the first-born," Heb. 12:23; "the body of Christ," 1 Cor. 12:27; "churches of Christ," Rom. 16:16.

2. *From the viewpoint of creed.*

(1) They have no man-made creed, nor discipline, nor confession of faith. They look upon human creeds as sinful and divisive.

(2) They have no creed but Christ, Matt. 16:16, 10:32-33; John 20:30-31; Acts 16:31, etc. This is the one universal, and *undenominational*, creed; the one article of faith essential to salvation.

(3) They have no book of discipline but the New Testament, John 1:17, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. The teaching of the New Testament is sufficient to cover every problem of congregational organization and activity; human books of discipline are therefore unnecessary. All things pertaining to life and godliness were given with the completion of the New Testament, 2 Pet. 1:3

(4) Jesus commends the congregations at Pergamum and Philadelphia for keeping His name and His word, Rev. 2:13, 3:8. His name is the name, "Christian," and His word is the New Testament.

3. *From the viewpoint of worship.*

(1) They have no denominational rites, ceremonials nor forms of worship.

(2) They meet on the Lord's Day for divine worship, Acts 20:7, Rev. 1:10, 1 Cor. 16:2.

(3) This worship consists of prayer and praise, gospel preaching, the Lord's Supper, and the contribution of substance to the Lord's treasury, Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 11:23-30, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.

(4) They believe the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, because it is the sword of the Spirit, Rom. 1:16, Eph. 6:17.

(5) They believe it is their duty to carry out the terms of the great commission and to evangelize the world for Christ, Matt. 28: 18:20, Mark 16:15-16, Rom. 10:11-15.

(6) They seek to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to exemplify in their lives the fruits of the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 3:18, 2 Pet. 1:5-7, Gal. 5:22-25.

4. *From the viewpoint of organization.*

(1) They have no ecclesiastical organization—no popes, cardinals, archbishops, nor church councils.

(2) They have no self-constituted clergy.

(3) They have no synod, conference, association nor assembly.

(4) Each local church of Christ is an independent Christian society under the authority of Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

(5) Each local church has its plurality of elders and deacons, Acts 20:17, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5, 1 Tim. 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-6, etc. Those elders who labor in "word and doctrine" are known as ministers or evangelists, 1 Tim. 5:17, Eph. 3:7, 1 Thess. 3:2, 1 Tim. 4:6, Acts 21:8, 2 Tim. 4:5. (Elders are known also in the New Testament as bishops, pastors, overseers and presbyters.)

(6) Each local church is, in itself, a *theocracy*, democratically administered. In all matters wherein Christ

has legislated (matters of faith) it is obligated to obey without question; in all matters wherein Christ has not legislated (matters of opinion) it is to be guided by the law of expediency.

(7) The members of these local churches, however, while not bound together in any organic way, i. e., by an overhead organization, may and do have fellowship with one another in missionary, evangelistic and charitable enterprises. See Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 4:15-17, etc. Such fellowship is purely voluntary.

(8) The International Convention of the Churches of Christ is not an authoritative body in any sense. It is not even a delegate convention. It is merely a mass meeting of Christians. Any decision or expression made by this convention is at best but an expression of sentiment on the part of those individual Christians present and is not to be construed in any was as binding upon the free churches of Christ.

(9) The United Christian Missionary Society is just a legal corporation. As such it receives and disburses funds contributed by the churches and by individual Christians for the purposes specified in its charter. It is merely a *tool* of the churches and has not a single vestige of authority over them. The same thing is true of any missionary, benevolent or educational agency.

(10) The autonomy of the local church is a principle which the churches of Christ can not surrender under any circumstances. To do so would be to forsake their New Testament position.

Conclusions: (1) It thus becomes evident that the churches of Christ, not having any denominational name,

creed, form of worship, nor ecclesiastical machinery, occupy an *undenominational* position.

(2) This truth is further established by an appeal to the instances of New Testament conversion as recorded in the book of Acts.

(a) The church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30. On this occasion Peter stated the Scriptural terms of pardon and opened the door of the church. Three thousand people *heard* his sermon, Acts 2:13-36; *believed*, v. 37; *repented*, and were *baptized*, vv. 38, 41; after which the Lord added them to the church, v. 47. To what *denomination* did they belong? To none at all—they belonged to the church of Christ.

(b) The Samaritans *heard* Philip's preaching, Acts 8:5-6; *believed*, and were *baptized*, v. 12. To what *denomination* did they belong? To none at all, but to the church of Christ.

(c) The Ethiopian officer *heard* Philip's preaching, Acts 8:35; *believed*, v. 36; and was *baptized*, vv. 36-39. To what *denomination* did he belong? To none at all, but to the church of Christ.

(d) The Jewish persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, *heard* what to do from Ananias, Acts 9:16-17, 22:14-15; *believed*, 9:5, 26:15; *repented*, 9:8-11, 26:19; and was *baptized*, 9:18, 22:16. To what *denomination* did Saul belong? He belonged to the church of Christ, not to any denomination.

(e) Cornelius (and his household) *heard* the gospel from Peter, Acts 10:34-43; *believed*, 15:7-9; and was *baptized*, 10:47-48. To what *denomination* did Cornelius belong? To none at all, but to the body of Christ.

(f) Lydia and her household *heard* the Word, Acts 16:14; *believed*, v. 14; and were *baptized*, v. 15. To what

denomination did this business woman from Thyatira belong? To none at all, but to the church of Christ.

(g) The Philippian jailor (and his household) *heard* the Word, Acts 16:32; *believed*, v. 31; and was *baptized*, v. 33. To what *denomination* did this heathen jailor belong? To none at all. He was a member of the body of Christ.

(h) The Corinthians *heard*, *believed* and were *baptized*, Acts 18:8. To what denomination did these Corinthian converts belong? To none at all, but to the church of Christ.

(3) Thus it will be seen that all who came into the church under the preaching of the apostles came *in identically the same way*. They believed, repented and were baptized into Christ. The Lord then added them to the church of Christ. It follows, without any possibility of contradiction, that when you believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess His name publicly, and are baptized into Him, the Lord adds you to the church. He does not add you to any *denomination:* He adds you to the church, or body of Christ.

(4) I hear someone objecting: "I agree with you thus far. I agree that you occupy an undenominational position until you get to the water. But, when you insist upon immersion strictly, you distinguish yourselves from other professing Christians and thus become a denomination." But—think just a moment! Do the churches of Christ *distinguish themselves* from other professing Christian bodies by insisting upon immersion? Certainly not. Immersion is recognized to be baptism by all communions, Protestant and Catholic. If you have been immersed, you will be accepted as baptized by any church in Christendom, with the exception of

the Quakers. No one questions the validity of the immersion of a penitent believer in water. It follows, then, that *denominational bodies distinguish themselves from the churches of Christ* when they accept and practise sprinkling or pouring, or infant sprinkling, as substitutes for Christian baptism. The denominations do the distinguishing, not the churches of Christ.

(5) Nor do the churches of Christ *distinguish themselves* from other professing Christians in the observance of the Lord's Supper. For this reason they do not practise what is called "close communion." They follow the apostolic command, "Let a man prove himself," 1 Cor. 11:28.

Thus it will be seen that there is no evidence of Scripture nor rule of logic by which it can be argued that the churches of Christ are a denomination. They occupy an *undenominational* position. We plead with you to abandon the things that divide, and to step out on this undenominational ground—*now*. Come, taking Christ as your only creed, and the New Testament as your only guide in Christian faith and worship.

XI

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:18-32.

Text: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity." —Rom. 1:20.

The text explained. The idea expressed by the apostle in this text is that "ever since the creation of the world and men have existed, they have been enabled, by means of the works of creation, to arrive at the apprehension of certain traits of the Almighty, otherwise undiscoverable among them." (Lard, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 51). In other words, from the very dawn of creation, the everlasting power and divinity of God have been written so indelibly upon the book of nature that all races of men have derived therefrom some sort of a conception of the Deity. History affords no example of a people without some form of *religion.* The apostle then goes ahead to depict the failures of *natural religion.* The outstanding thought is that natural religion proved woefully inadequate in the fact that it failed to hold in check the natural appetites and passions of the human race, vv. 24-32. Idolatry has ever been the besetting sin of the pagan world, v. 23. *Natural religion* is a term which includes any and all systems of worship which men have devised from their own conceptions of the workings of nature. All natural religion is of

human origin. Being of human origin, its universal failure may be attributed to its lack of *divine authority*.

Preliminary definitions. My text demands two definitions: (1) of *religion;* (2) of *authority*.

(1) *Religion.* What is religion? (a) The prevailing idea has been that the word is derived from *religare*, meaning "to bind back" (man to God). (b) The more correct derivation seems to be from *relegere*, meaning "to go over again," "carefully to ponder." "Its original meaning is therefore 'reverent observance' (of duties to the gods)." (Strong, *Systematic Theology, Vol. I.*, p. 20). According to Hegel, religion is *knowledge*. If this were true, it would be only an incomplete form of philosophy, and the measure of knowledge in each case would determine piety. According to Schleiermacher, religion is the mere *feeling of dependence*. This is a false conception, however, because the mere feeling of dependence does not become religion unless exercised towards the Deity. Kant maintained that religion is *moral action*. Morality, however, is conformity to the abstract rule of right, while religion is a broader term. *Religion is essentially a personal relation to a divine Person*, to whom the soul surrenders in loving obedience and from whom it receives blessing and salvation. Worship is the outward expression of religion. The word is found only a few times in the Bible. See Acts 25:19, 26:5, 17:22; Gal. 1:13; Jas. 1:26-27.

The words of an old hymn read:

> "'Tis religion that can give
> Sweetest pleasures while we live.
> 'Tis religion must supply
> Solid comfort when we die."

(2) *Authority.* The *Standard Dictionary* defines authority as: "The right to command and enforce obedience; the right to act by virtue of office, station or relation; as, the authority of parent over child; the authority of an officer." As regards its *source*, authority may be divided into two classes: (a) *Primary authority*, which is inherent by virtue of its being the very fountain-head of all authority in a given realm. (b) *Delegated authority*, which is authority vested in another by the party holding primary authority. For example, in our plan of government, primary authority is in the people; but delegated authority is vested in the representatives elected by the people to enact, execute and interpret the laws of the land. As regards the *governed*, authority must be one of two kinds: (a) *internal*, or *subjective*, i. e., within the individual; (b) *external*, or *objective*, i. e., outside the individual. These preliminary definitions stated, let us now proceed with the argument.

Argument: A perfect religion must have perfect authority; and perfect authority presupposes perfect love, perfect wisdom and perfect justice. Perfect love, wisdom and justice must be inherent in perfect authority. These fundamental truths may be accepted as "religious axioms." Let us apply these truths to (1) *sources of internal authority in religion*, and (2) *sources of external authority.*

1. *Sources of internal authority.* Thus far only four sources of internal authority have been suggested:

(1) *Conscience.* Are we safe in accepting and following conscience as an infallible guide? I hardly think so, for the reason that conscience makes mistakes. Saul of Tarsus in his early life was a persecutor; later he refers to his career as a Jewish zealot by saying that

he was the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15-16. (a) *Conscience may be hardened*, 1 Tim. 4:2. (b) *It may be weak and defiled*, Tit. 1:15. (c) *It may be misdirected*, as in Saul's case. The woman who feeds her baby to the crocodile of the Ganges thinks she is worshipping God, but it does not follow that she is worshipping God because she thinks so. Her conscience is misdirected. (d) *Conscience is a creature of education.* It does not determine right and wrong. It merely *approves* when we do what we *believe* to be right, and *disapproves* when we do what we *believe* to be wrong. (e) *A good conscience* is one educated according to the law of God and purified by the blood of Christ, Rom. 9:1, 1 Tim. 3:9, Heb. 9:14. (f) *Conscience*, therefore, *can not be a source of authority in religion*, as it points to something higher than itself. "The authority of conscience" is merely the authority of the moral law, and depends upon one's knowledge of that law. If knowledge is imperfect, conscience is liable to lead to error. We can not go to human conscience for perfect love, wisdom and justice for the simple reason that man's wisdom is incomplete and imperfect.

(2) *Religious experience or feeling.* Many people have been led to think that a certain happy, joyous, excited or pleasurable feeling is religion, and therefore depend upon feeling as their guide. They refer to this "experience" as "getting religion." But can we accept *feeling* as the source of authority in religion? Certainly not. Feeling is a very indefinable quantity. (a) Men do not do right because they feel good; they feel good because they have done right. You do not serve the Lord because you are happy; on the contrary, you are happy when you know you are serving the Lord. I have

known bad people to feel good; and I have known some good people who were unhappy. The fact that a good man may be in distress is no evidence, however, that he is a bad man or wicked in the sight of God. Feelings are somewhat like the thermometer—they go up and down with the temperature. (b) Men may experience certain emotions, yet how are they to know that these emotions are of a religious nature? Those who rely upon feeling are compelled to rely upon their own judgment in determining whether their feelings are *religious* or purely *emotional*. This theory places the final authority in man's *judgment*. But man's judgment is liable to error. As man does not possess perfect love, wisdom and justice, he is unable to determine the nature of a perfect religious experience, and to know whether or not that experience is based on fact. We must, therefore, reject feeling as a source of authority in religion.

(3) *A direct revelation of the Holy Spirit.* Some will argue that God speaks directly to men through divine inspiration. If so, mysticism and theosophy must be true. But, if God speaks directly to the individual, how is the individual to know that it is God who speaks to him? Joseph Smith claimed to have a special revelation from God, on the basis of which he established Mormonism. William Miller and Mrs. Ellen G. White claimed to be the recipients of special divine revelations, as a result of which they set up Seventh-Day Adventism. Mrs. Eddy claimed to have a special revelation from God and founded Christian Science. Every religious delusion the world has known has been founded upon a special revelation from God. Is it possible that the same God would deliver so many conflicting revelations?

Does the Holy Spirit inspire one man to preach up Lutheranism and another to preach it down? Does the same God inspire one man to preach up Methodism and another to preach it down? Is God the author of the many conflicting "isms" in the Christian world of to-day? Certainly not. God is not a God of chaos, but of order. "Isms" are of human origin and have no salvation in them. There is no evidence in the Scripture, nor anywhere else, that God speaks to men directly in the present dispensation. Inspiration ended when the apostles had completed their work and had embodied the doctrine of Christ in the words of the New Testament. We must therefore reject any and all alleged special revelations of the Spirit as sources of authority in religion.

(4) *Reason.* This is the god of the rationalist. He boasts that he follows his reason; that the only authority which he recognizes is that of the "inner consciousness." If reason is trustworthy, how is it that one man will follow his reason to one conclusion, and another will follow his reason to an entirely different conclusion? Man's moral and intellectual imperfection lead him into incorrect reasoning and erroneous conclusions. As perfect love, wisdom and justice are not inherent in the human mind, it follows that reason is an unsafe guide and can not be accepted as the source of authority in religion. The most narrow and unreasonable people in the world are those who depend solely upon reason. "The hen that has hatched ducklings walks with them to the water's edge, but there she stops, and she is amazed when they go on. So reason stops and faith goes on, finding its proper element in the invisible. Reason is the feet that stand on solid earth; faith is the wings that enable us to fly; and normal man is a creature with wings."

We are compelled to reject all sources of authority within man as incomplete, inadequate and liable to error, for the following reasons:

(1) Man, as he is, is morally and intellectually imperfect. His knowledge being incomplete, his reasoning faculties are impaired. His moral condition being imperfect, both conscience and feeling are unreliable. Of course when religious experience and conscience are trained by *divine revelation*, they are to a certain degree dependable; but this would place the source of authority, not within man, but in the outside revelation by which man is trained.

(2) Internal authority leads to religious anarchy. There would be as many sources of authority as there are human beings of accountable age. Rationalism is the parent of anarchy and license.

(3) Internal authority leads to self-worship. It exalts the creature instead of the Creator. Modernists tell us that even our conceptions of God are not *revelations*, but *intuitions;* that all inspiration is but the product of human genius; that God never revealed himself to man, but that man formed his own conceptions of God and elaborated those conceptions to conform to his needs as he passed from lower to higher stages of development; in other words, that God never created man, but that man created God. What is this but self-worship? It is the age-old sin of self-exaltation; the choosing of self-will above the will of God; the sin that caused the downfall of our first parents, Gen. 3:6.

(4) Again, the religious worshipper has no means of knowing, without a revelation, what will please the one worshipped. To accept any source of internal authority will lead ultimately to the denial of Deity and the en-

thronement of self. Even those who accept a special revelation of the Spirit as the source of authority practically dethrone God in the sense that they reject His word as a "dead letter" and depend wholly upon their feelings.

(5) Finally, man's numerous failures in the social, political and industrial worlds show that he is incapable of governing himself in matters pertaining to the soul. If he has made grievous mistakes in temporal matters, his judgment in spiritual matters is liable to be all the more injudicious and erroneous. Illustrate by the recent World War.

Having rejected all sources of internal authority, let us examine the sources of external authority in religion which have been offered.

2. *Sources of external authority.* We reject all systems of natural religion on the ground that they are the offspring of human conceptions. The human heart, not possessing perfect love, wisdom and justice can not be depended upon as a perfect source of authority in religion. Most so-called natural religions such as Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Confucianism, for example, are nothing but systems of philosophy. Their chief characteristic is their lack of authority, or of any claim to authority. Christianity is, in a sense, the only true religion, in that its Founder lays claim to the possession of all authority in heaven and upon earth in matters pertaining to the soul, Matt. 28:18. When we pass from the realm of *natural*, into that of *revealed*, religion, however, we find sources of external authority offered which are also of purely human origin. Among these are: (1) the papacy; (2) the historic episcopacy; (3) creeds; and (4) church councils.

(1) *The papacy.* The Roman Catholic Church teaches that all local churches are subject to the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, who is claimed to be the successor of Peter and the vicegerent of Christ upon earth, and thus united constitute the one and only church of Christ. Catholic theology vests all authority in the Pope. The dogma of infallibility which was enacted in 1870 was passed for the purpose of giving strength to this monstrous pretension. In order to establish her claims, the Roman Catholic Church must prove:

(a) *The primacy of Peter.* (a) Matt. 16:18. In the Greek text the *masculine* gender is used in the words, "thou art Peter" (*petros*), but in the phrase following, "upon this rock," the feminine gender (*petra*) is used. Now, since the feminine gender could not refer to Peter, it must refer to something else, which presumably could be nothing other than Peter's confession, or the truth which he had just confessed. (b) Matt. 16:19. Much is made of this statement by Catholic theologians, but the same promise was later repeated to *all* the apostles, John 20:22-23. (c) The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth was made to all the apostles, and the Holy Spirit was conferred upon all of them, John 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15, 20:22-23; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:1-5, 2:1-4. (d) There is no evidence from the gospel narratives that any special revelations were made to Peter that were not made to the other apostles. The evidence is, in fact, to the contrary, that the Master taught equality among all the apostles, Luke 22:29-30, John 13:12-20. (e) In filling the vacancy in the apostleship, Peter did not appoint the successor to Judas, but the whole assembly voted, Acts 1:15-26. (f) The same

democratic method was employed in the choice of deacons in the church at Jerusalem, Acts 6:1-6. (g) James, not Peter, presided over the council at Jerusalem, A. D. 48. The whole church consented in the matters brought forward, Acts 15:4-22. (h) Peter himself received a commission to go to Samaria, Acts 8:14. He went at the decision and command of the apostles. (i) Peter was taken to task by his brethren for preaching the gospel to Gentiles in the case of Cornelius and was called upon to make explanations, Acts 11:1-18. (j) Peter was rebuked by Paul on one occasion, Gal. 2:11. (k) Peter claims no authority over the other apostles, 1 Pet. 5:1.

(b) *The infallibility of Peter.* That Peter was not infallible is proved by the fact that Jesus rebuked him on several occasions, that he denied the Lord, and that Paul later "resisted him to his face." See Matt. 16:21-23, Luke 22:31-34, John 18:15-27, Gal. 2:11. Moreover, Peter was a married man, Matt. 8:14.

(c) *That Peter was Bishop of Rome.* Roman Catholics claim that in A. D. 51 Peter had sat eight years as Bishop of Rome and that he continued twenty-five years in that office and was martyred in Rome in A. D. 68; that he was, therefore, Bishop of Rome from A. D. 43 to 68. Historical facts do not bear out this claim. (a) It is not stated in the Scriptures that Peter ever was in Rome. (b) Paul says that three years after his conversion, A. D. 37, he went to Jerusalem to see Peter and stayed with him fifteen days, Gal. 1:18. (c) Peter was imprisoned in Jerusalem in A. D. 44. (d) In A. D. 58 Paul wrote the *Epistle to the Romans*, sending salutations to twenty-seven persons, but did not mention Peter, Rom. 16:3-15. (e) Paul was martyred in Rome

in A. D. 66. Late in A. D. 63 or early in 64 Paul arrived in Rome, visited the Christians and was visited by them, but Peter is not mentioned. (f) In A. D. 62 or 63 Paul wrote the epistles to Philemon, the Philippians, the Ephesians and the Colossians, and though residing in Rome at the time he makes no mention of Peter. (g) Near the time of his martyrdom Paul was forsaken—"only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). Where was Peter, if Bishop of Rome? (h) Peter writes, A. D. 60, to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, but makes no mention of Rome. Had he been Bishop of Rome at the time, is it not likely he would have referred to Rome in the course of his first general epistle? (i) Paul was martyred in Rome in A. D. 66. Peter's second epistle was written that year but there is no mention of Paul, nor of Rome, in the epistle. From all this evidence it is quite clear that there is no proof whatever for the Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter.

Remember, perfect authority presupposes perfect love, justice and wisdom. A careful study of the lives of the Popes reveals anything but these three characteristics. For example war between contending aspirants for the papacy was quite common in early days. At one time Benedict IX., Sylvester III., and Gregory VII., all claimed to be Pope at the same time. Pius II. led a vile life and excused himself on the ground that David and Solomon had been guilty of the same "indiscretions." Innocent III. married his own son in the palace and presented the bridal couple with 10,000 ducats; and when his granddaughter was married he became bolder and celebrated her marriage in the Vatican. Alexander VI. was brazen enough to acknowledge the paternity of a son after he had become Pope and made his own daughter his private secretary. Leo X. spent 8,000 ducats per month on his table, approximately $18,400 per month. Poor fellow! It's a wonder he didn't starve to death! Stephen VII. had the body of his predecessor exhumed and tried for heresy. And what

shall I say of the woman, Joan, who is said to have worn man's raiments, deceived her subjects, and occupied St. Peter's chair for about two years and a half? From these facts, it is quite evident that we could hardly go to the papacy for perfect love, wisdom and justice; therefore we must reject the papacy as the source of authority in religion. (See *Center Shots at Rome*, by Geo. P. Rutledge).

(2) *The historic episcopacy.* Episcopacy is that form of government in which authority is vested in bishops who are claimed to be the legitimate successors of the apostles. An Episcopalian is a person who "considers that episcopacy is the best, if not even the one divinely appointed government in the Christian Church, and personally belongs to a church which has as its high ecclesiastical officers, bishops. In this sense the members of the Roman, Greek and English churches are Episcopalians." We object to this source of authority on the following grounds: (a) There is no evidence in the New Testament that the apostles delegated their divine authority to any man or group of men. Had Peter held the office of Bishop of Rome, there is no evidence whatever that he appointed any successors. The Popes of Rome can no more trace their descent from Peter, nor the bishops of the Anglican Church their descent from the apostles, than Alexander the Great could trace his descent from Jupiter. (b) The men whom Jesus had associated with Him in His public ministry did not become apostles until they had actually seen Him after His resurrection. This qualified them to be witnesses, Acts 1:8, 2 Pet. 1:16-18. Jesus appeared in person to Saul of Tarsus, not to convert him, but to qualify him for the apostleship, Acts 26:16-18. Now a witness can testify only to what he has *seen;* therefore *a witness can have no successors.* I am face-

tious enough to remark that history proves Judas to have been the only apostle who has had successors. (c) The bishops of the Anglican Church are *men*. Being men, they can not claim perfect love, justice and wisdom; and can not therefore be accepted as the true source of authority in religion.

(3) *Church councils*. Some Protestant bodies vest religious authority in church councils, synods, conferences, assemblies or associations. Now the apostles certainly never delegated divine authority to any church council; and the decisions of church councils are purely the opinions of uninspired men. The authority exercised by such bodies of men is *usurped;* it has no Scripture foundation. There is no evidence whatsoever that Jesus or His apostles ever vested any authority in the church, or any group of men representing the church. These councils, being composed of men who can not claim perfect love, justice or wisdom, it follows that their decisions can not be accepted as the true source of authority in religion.

(4) Lastly, we have *creeds*. Creeds, however, are but the written opinions of uninspired men, and are without any divine authority. If a creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it contains less than the Bible, it contains too little; and if it contains the same teaching as the Bible, it is not necessary because we have the Bible. No group of men have any Scriptural or moral right to formulate a human creed and force it upon others as a test of fellowship. This business of creed-making is one of the things that has divided Christendom into warring sects.

Conclusions: We have now arrived at the following conclusions:

(1) That, strictly speaking, there is only one true system of religion, and that is Christianity, because it offers the world a perfect Source of authority—a Person who possesses perfect love, wisdom and justice.

(2) That perfect Source of authority is God, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible is a God of love, a God of wisdom, and a God of immaculate justice. As the Psalmist has said,

"Mercy and truth are met together,
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other,"

in the Christian's God. He is a God who is long-suffering, yet manifestly just; who loves humanity with all the compassion of His infinite heart; who is ever-present in His universe to such an extent that He even marks the sparrow's fall; in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is the only Being worthy of our worship because He is perfect in love, justice and wisdom. 1 John 4:8, John 3:16, Psa. 103:13-14, Matt. 10:29-31, Jas. 1:17, Psa. 85:10, 2 Pet. 2:4-10, etc.

(3) As God is the One worshipped, it follows that He must determine what form and spirit of worship will please Him. If He is a God of love, He surely would not permit His creatures to live and die in sin without any attempt to reveal His will and His love to them. Now the Bible is the only book in the world which claims to be a revelation from God. It is the book of *revealed* religion—the only religion possessing perfect authority because it has a perfect Source of authority.

(4) Two questions arise at this point: Has God revealed Himself to man *directly* or through divinely appointed *means*? If God is the primary source of authority in true religion, has He ever seen fit to delegate that divine authority to any one else, and if so, to

whom? These are pertinent questions which we shall discuss in our next sermon on "Authority in Christianity."

What utter folly it is for men to lean upon their own understanding in matters affecting the destiny of the soul! Massive volumes have been turned loose upon the unsuspecting world in the last few years to bolster up the theories of rationalism, or "modernism," or "the New Theology," whatever it may be called. Most of it has been

> "Begotten without thought, born without pains,
> The ropey drivel of rheumatic brains."

Such foolishness is illustrated in the experience of Abraham Lincoln. "What is this transcendentalism we hear so much about?" asked Mr. Lincoln. The answer came: "You see those swallows digging holes in yonder bank? Well, take away the bank from around those holes, and what is left is transcendentalism." The same thing may be said of so-called "modernism."

The authority which I appeal to you to accept at this time is the authority of the God of love. He is a God who "daily bears our burdens," who "in our afflictions is afflicted," Psa. 68:19, Isa. 63:9. In the words of Abbe Gratry,

> "What! Do you really suppose that the personal God, free and intelligent, loving and good, who knows every detail of human torture, and hears every sigh—the God who sees, who loves as we do, and more than we do—do you believe that He is present and looks pitilessly on what breaks your heart, and what to Him must be the spectacle of Satan reveling in the blood of humanity? History teaches us that men so feel for sufferers that they have been drawn to die with them, so that their own executioners have become the next martyrs. And yet you represent God, the absolute goodness, as alone impassible? It is here that our evangelical faith comes in.

> Our God was made man to suffer and to die! Yes, here is the true God. He has suffered from the beginning in all who have suffered. He has been hungry in all who have hungered. He has been immolated in all and with all who have given up their lives. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Yes, He is a God who shares our sufferings, and who, in turn, permits us, if we are faithful, to share His crown. The love of God will follow you to the grave; it can not consistently follow you farther. At the grave, if you are still impenitent, love must give way to justice. Why will you continue to spurn this love which is so infinitely gracious and tender?

XII

AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY*

Scripture Reading: Matt. 28.

Text: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and upon earth"—Matt. 28:18.

Introduction: (1) Practically all the questions underlying present-day denominationalism are questions of *authority*, and not of *interpretation*. For example, take the question of Christian baptism. All authorities of note, both Catholic and Protestant, agree that baptism, in New Testament times, was the immersion of the candidate in water and emersion therefrom. The substitution of sprinkling or pouring for immersion was made first by Pope Stephen II., by an edict which was ratified by the Council of Ravenna in 1311. Any Catholic priest will tell you that immersion was the primitive act of baptism, but that the substitution was made by the authority of the Pope, and he will also tell you that the Pope had the authority, as the alleged vicegerent of Christ, to make the change. Protestants, who maintain the practice of sprinkling or pouring, are not quite so consistent. While they will deny the

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*Credit should be given Gen. Z. T. Sweeney, from whose sermon "The Source of Authority in Christianity," much of the subject-matter of this outline is adapted. See *Watchword of the Restoration Movement Vindicated*, pp. 3-18.

authority of the Pope, yet they will continue to practise a substitution first authorized by papal authority, on the ground that "so long as the *spirit* of the act is right, the *form* is a matter of secondary importance." After all, the question of baptism is a question of the authority of Jesus versus papal authority, and not a question of interpretation in any sense of the term. The question of authority in Christianity is the most far-reaching question before the Christian world.

(2) *The subject stated by exclusion.* We are *not* discussing:

(a) The question of authority in *religion.* This has already been discussed. We have found that Christianity is, strictly speaking, the only true religion in that it has a perfect Source of authority, who possesses perfect love, justice and wisdom. That Source of authority is the God of the Bible.

(b) The source of authority in the different *dispensations* of God's revelation to man. The Patriarchal age and the Mosaic age expired by limitation, and their authority expired with them.

(c) The source of authority in *Catholicism.* Catholicism is a mixture of Judaism, paganism and Christianity. It is an apostasy from the true faith.

(d) The source of authority in *Protestantism.* Protestantism, in its various denominational forms, is Christianity corrupted by theological speculation.

(e) The source of authority in *ecclesiasticism.* There is a great difference between Christianity and ecclesiasticism. Ecclesiasticism is of human origin, and it is my purpose to show you in the course of this sermon that all ecclesiasticism is human usurpation of authority.

(f) Nor is it my intention to discuss *interpretations*, or *creeds*. "Interpretation is the process by which we arrive at the meaning of a message; authority is the power to command and enforce obedience to a message."

(3) *The subject stated by inclusion.* This requires two definitions:

(a) *Of authority.* Authority is defined by the *Standard Dictionary* as "the right to command and enforce obedience; the right to act by virtue of office, station or relation; as, the authority of parent over child; the authority of an officer." There are two kinds of authority: *Primary* authority, vested in sources of authority; and *delegated* authority, or authority transferred from the primary source of authority to another party.

(b) *Of Christianity.* The *Standard Dictionary* defines Christianity as "the doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ." Webster's *New Unabridged Dictionary* defines it as "the system of doctrines and precepts taught by Christ." Both definitions are defective in that they refer to Christ's teaching in the plural number. The Bible speaks of the doctrines of men and the doctrines of devils, but never of the *doctrines* of Christ. References to the teaching of Christ are always in the singular number.

> "Christianity is the revelation of God through Jesus Christ whereby reconciliation and a new spiritual life in fellowship with Himself are brought to mankind. The religion of Christ is inseparable from the life and character of its Founder and from His personal relations to the race and to the community of His followers. Herein Christianity is differentiated from systems of philosophy. They might remain unaltered were their authors forgotten or never known. Equally is it contrasted with ethnic religions, whether they spring up in the dark-

> ness of prehistoric times, or are linked to the names of specific founders, real or imaginary. To undertake to dissever Christianity from Christ is to mistake its nature and to ignore some of its essential requirements."
>
> —Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 1.

Christianity and Christ are one and inseparable. No matter from what angle we view Christianity, we find Christ the central point of the system. (a) As a *kingdom*, it presents Him as the *King*, John 18:36-37, Luke 23:3. (b) As a *church*, it presents Him as the *Head*, Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18. (c) As a system of *doctrine* or *teaching*, it presents Him as the *Teacher*, John 3:2, Matt. 4:23 and 28:20. (d) As a system of *law*, it centers in Him as the *Lawgiver*, Rom. 8:2, 13:8-10, Gal. 6:2. (e) As a *life*, it presents Him as the perfect *Exemplar*, John 1:4, Col. 3:4, 1 Pet. 2:21. (f) As a system of *reconciliation*, or *salvation*, it presents Him as *Savior*, John 1:29, 2 Pet. 2:20, 3:18. (g) As an *army*, it presents Him as the *Captain*, Heb. 2:10. (h) As a *structure* of faith and works, it presents Him as the *Chief Cornerstone*, Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:6. (i) As a system of revelation, it presents Him as the Word of truth, John 1:1, 14 and 14:6. (j) As a means of *reunion* with God, it presents Him as the *Way*, John 14:6, and so on. What the sun is to the solar system, Christ is to Christianity. It stands or falls with Him: if Christ is human, Christianity is human; if Christ is divine, Christianity is divine. The *great truth* of Christianity is that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. 16:16; and this truth rests upon the *great fact* of Christianity that Jesus arose from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:16-17.

Argument: 1. *The source of all primary authority in Christianity is God*, as we have already learned, 1 Cor.

3:21-23, Gal. 1:1. God is our Maker, Preserver and Benefactor. It is His absolute right to command and our absolute duty to obey. However, our Heavenly Father has seldom chosen to govern men by the exercise of His primary authority. He has chosen, as a rule, to exercise His authority through chosen vessels. In the Patriarchal dispensation, He exercised His authority through the patriarchs; in the Mosaic dispensation, through His chosen leaders, first Moses and his successors, then the judges, and finally the prophets, Heb. 1:1, 1 Pet. 1:21, John 1:17, Gal. 3:19.

2. *The first delegation of authority in Christianity was from the Father to the Son.* Heb. 1:1; John 5:19-23, 5:37, 43; 6:37-38; 8:42, 54; 14:10-11. Consider the words of our text, "All authority hath been *given unto me.*" The Son stands nearest the Father in delegated authority: "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2:9; "that in him should all the fulness dwell," Col. 1:19; "the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance," Heb. 1:3; "the image of the invisible God," Col. 1:15. The Father acknowledged Him publicly after His baptism in the Jordan, Matt. 3:17; and again on the mount of transfiguration, with the additional injunction, "Hear ye him," Matt. 17:5. Jesus is (a) the *reflection* of the *purity* of God, John 8:46, 2 Cor. 5:21; (b) the *demonstration* of the *power* of God, John 2:11, 5:21, 14:10-11; (c) the *manifestation* of the *love* of God, John 3:16, Eph. 3:19, Rom. 8:35, 1 John 3:16, 1 John 4:9-11, John 15:13.

> "Mr. Moody used to tell the beautiful story of an old mother in England, whose only daughter had gone astray and wandered down to London and was living a life of sin and shame. After trying all other means, the mother had her photograph

taken and under it the legend, 'My child, come home.' This she had placed in some of the haunts of vice, where the daughter saw it and was led back home by this expression of unfailing love. Jesus Christ is the photograph of the ever-loving Father crying out to sinful mortals, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

—Sweeney, *Watchword of the Restoration Vindicated*, p. 9.

2. *The second delegation of authority in Christianity was from the Son to the apostles.*

(1) While Jesus was upon earth in person, He exercised His authority personally, as, for instance, when He forgave sins and when He pardoned the thief on the cross, Matt. 9:6, Luke 23:43.

(2) His earthly ministry, however, had to come to an end. Knowing that it would be of limited duration, He began immediately after His baptism to make preparation for the authoritative execution of His last will and testament. He called twelve men to become His intimate associates, Matt. 10:2-4, and spent a great part of His time implanting in their minds the essential principles of Christianity. He taught them by precept, parable and example. Eleven of them became apostles; but one, Judas, fell from the apostleship, Acts 1:25. Even after His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with these eleven men teaching them the things concerning the kingdom of God, Acts 1:1-5.

(3) In the Lord's prayer, recorded in John 17, we find the following truths set forth: (a) That God gave His Son authority over all flesh, v. 2. (b) That this authority was given in order that the Son might be able to bestow eternal life. (c) That eternal life is bestowed through the knowledge of the true God and His Son Jesus Christ, v. 3. (d) That God gave the Son certain men out of the world, that the Son might reveal to

them the system of truth which God had given Him, vv. 6-17. (e) That all believers should come to believe on Him through their testimony, v. 20.

(4) At this point a human element entered into the delegation of authority. In the transfer of authority from the Father to the Son there was no danger of error, because the Son is as divine as the Father, John 5:17-23; 10:30, 38; 16:15; Phil. 2:6; 1 Thess. 3:11, etc. But the apostles were men and there was danger that they might misapprehend the revelations which Jesus made to them. It was necessary, therefore, to qualify them with divine power to preserve them from error. Hence we hear Christ promising them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth in proclaiming His gospel to the world. John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 1:1-8. The words in which this delegation of authority was specifically clothed are found in John 20:22-23. These promises were all fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the apostles were overwhelmed in this divine power to clothe them with infallibility, Acts 2:1-4, 1 Cor. 2:9-13. (Paul received his authority by special revelation, Acts 26:16-18, Gal. 1:12).

(5) As Jesus was the personal representative of God upon the earth, so the Spirit-filled apostles were the authorized ambassadors of Christ. Their teaching is His teaching; their authority, His authority. Matt. 10:40, John 20:21.

3. *There is no evidence in the divine record that the apostles delegated this authority to any one else.*

(1) Their teaching and authority was at first *oral;* it was later embodied by them for permanency in the New Testament. With the completion of the New Testament all things pertaining to life and godliness

had been given, 2 Pet. 1:3. There is nothing essential to Christianity upon which they have not written with authority. There is nothing which can be rightfully added to this complete revelation, and nothing that can be rightfully taken away, Gal. 1:6-10, Rev. 22:18-19.

(2) The apostles are still exercising the authority delegated them. They are administering the affairs of Christ's kindgom through the New Testament Scriptures, Matt. 19:28. The "regeneration" here is undoubtedly the gospel dispensation.

(3) With the completion of the New Testament, all necessity for special inspiration or illumination by the Spirit came to an end. The person who is led by the Word of truth to-day is led by the Spirit; and no man can claim to be led by the Spirit who disregards the teaching of the Word. "The word is nigh thee," Rom. 10:8. Why then should one expect Christ to come down from above, or a spirit to return from the dead, to bring peace and pardon, when it is clearly stated that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation? Luke 16:31, Rom. 10:6-8, 1:16. The transfer of divine authority ended with the apostles.

(4) Our conclusions are: that God is the *primary* source of authority in Christianity; Christ, the *mediate* source; the apostles, the *executive* source; and the New Testament, the *stereotyped*, or *permanent* source. All are in perfect agreement as they emanate from the one perfect Source, who is the embodiment of perfect love, wisdom and justice.

(5) What is the extent of Christ's authority in His kingdom as administered by the apostles and revealed in the New Testament? He prescribes (a) *How we shall get into His kingdom*, and (b) *How we shall conduct our-*

selves as citizens of His kingdom. Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, Gal. 5:22-23, 2 Pet. 1:5-7. To surrender this authority in one point is to surrender it in all.

> *Illustrations:* (1) "The church of the apostolic period is the only church in which there is found an authority justly claiming the acknowledgment of Christian bodies in other times. And such authority is found in this church—not because it was possessed of a truer catholicity, or a purer constitution, or a more primitive antiquity than belong to succeeding ages; for neither antiquity, purity of form nor catholicity confers any right to govern or command; but because it was under the immediate rule and guidance of the apostles; and it is their infallible judgment alone, as exhibited in this church, which has a legitimate claim to our submission. Of the church of no other period can the same be said, because the apostles had no successors in their office. They stand alone. They stand alone as the divinely inspired teachers, legislators and rulers in Christ's church and kingdom. They stand alone as men appointed and commissioned by Christ Himself, and not by man. . . . . To go back to that time, and to endeavor, as far as possible, to reproduce the church of the New Testament, is most needful for us now, if we would preserve a faithful and distinct acknowledgment of Christian truth among our people."
>
> —Jacobs, Episcopalian, *Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament*, pp. 25, 29.

(2) Think what sweeping changes would be achieved by the restoration of the authority of Christ throughout all Christendom. (a) It would destroy Catholicism at a single blow. (b) It would strip Protestantism of its human element. Away would go human names, creeds, and ceremonials. (c) It would eliminate theology. (d) It would destroy the contents of many a ministerial "salt-barrel." (e) It would destroy the curriculum of practically every Bible college, divinity school, and theological seminary in the land. (f) It would bring about Christian unity. (g) It would clothe Christianity with

an exclusiveness that would render it invincible. (h) It would bring about the speedy evangelization of the world.

(3) The story is told that John S. Sweeney, on one occasion, dined with General Grant. Bro. Sweeney relates that, in the course of the conversation, he asked the General what the latter considered the happiest moment of his life. Grant replied: "The happiest moment of my life, sir, was when General Lee handed me his sword at Appomattox Courthouse." I imagine that the happiest moment of all wondrous experiences in the life of Jesus was when He stood on that mountain-top in Galilee and said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and upon earth."

(4) The Lord Jesus is the King who rules with the scepter of love, and His throne is in the human heart. He came with no captives at His chariot wheels. He came not as a great warrior comes, attended by the plaudit of the multitudes. He came by way of the Cross. He shall reign until every enemy shall be abolished, and the last enemy that shall be put to rout is death. He shall reign until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is the Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

"The world is weary of new tracks of thought
That lead to naught;
Sick of quack remedies prescribed in vain
For mortal pain.
For still above them all one Figure stands
With outstretched hands.

"Men's ears are deafened with conflicting cries—
'Here wisdom lies!'
'Here rest and peace are found'—'Lo, here!'—
'Lo, there!'
Yet still one voice repeats the tender plea,
'Come unto me.'

"Fools stumble on strange paths their fathers trod
In search of God,
But found Him not, and in defeat died
Unsatisfied.
Yet now, as then, One ceases not to say,
'I am the Way.'

"Would-be philosophers make blind our eyes
With sophistries,
And bid our faith by science stand appalled,
Falsely so-called.
Yet still ring out those words of tender truth,
'I am the Truth.'

"Men seek in vain some charm whereby to flee
Mortality;
Some magic potion which to them shall give
The power to live.
Yet still one message sounds above the strife,
'I am the Life.' "

Will you not accept the authority of Christ *now?* Will you not, while we sing, crown Him King of your heart, your soul, your life?

XIII

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-5.
Text: "I am the vine, ye are the branches."—John 15:5.

Introduction: At the time when Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott launched the plea for Christian unity on the basis of the New Testament, they met intense and united opposition. Among the Protestant denominations, then in their prime, the reunion of Christendom on any basis was regarded as impossible and undesirable. Denominationalism was defended on the ground that it was essential to the preservation and purity of the church. Many long sermons, abounding in metaphors and analogies, were preached to show that denominations were justified by the Scriptures and that they were necessary to the welfare and progress of Christianity. For example:

(1) It was argued that human beings have varying and conflicting temperaments which necessitate different systems of theology. For instance, it was pointed out that a person with an emotional temperament would never be satisfied with the stern, old-fashioned and undemonstrative beliefs and practices of the Presbyterian Church; and, on the other hand, that a person inclined to be conservative in thought and action would never feel at home in the midst of such demonstrations and "experiences" as those which characterized the

faith and worship of the Methodists. Therefore, said the staunch defenders of partyism, these denominations are needed in order that men and women may find the particular system of faith and worship which is best adapted to their mental and spiritual needs. For some reason, they overlooked the fact that Methodism, Presbyterianism, etc., can not, of themselves, be identified with the gospel. They were so "befogged" by *churchanity*, that they could not grasp any true conception of Christianity. I imagine that in New Testament times there were as many conflicting temperaments as at any other time in the history of Christianity, yet it seems that, under the preaching of the apostles and early evangelists, the gospel message satisfied the needs of all who believed its facts and accepted them.

"We see a river overflowing its banks, which was caused by a mighty flood. There has been a great storm — the lightning flashed—the thunder rolled—the winds blew. The water came down in torrents. The river channel was full to overflowing.

"I behold in another locality a river which has also overflowed its banks; but there has been no thunder— no flashing of the lightning—no roaring of the winds. No rain has been seen to fall. What has caused this flood? Go up on the mountain-side. The snow, under the powerful influence of the sun, has melted, run down the mountain sides into the river channel, quietly and gently and noiselessly has filled it to the brim. Two rivers, both full—full to overflowing—and yet under different circumstances.

"Here is a man in the congregation, a sinner. He is emotional, easily moved. Under the spell of the gospel, he gives vent to his feelings, shouts, rejoices. His heart has been filled; his life is full of the grace of God. Sitting by his side is another man, a sinner, of a quiet nature; not one bit emotional—logical, thoughtful. He has listened to the gospel, too. It has impressed him. He comes forward, makes his

> confession, obeys its commands, and rejoices, but not with the same demonstration. Both have been converted. The hearts of both are full."
>
> —Book, *Columbus Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. 1., pp. 129-130.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all people, regardless of heredity, environment or temperament.

(2) Again, it was argued that an army must have its cavalry, its infantry and its artillery; therefore the Lord's army must likewise have its various divisions, so that one who enlists may have the privilege of choosing the department he likes; that these various denominations are all co-operating in a common cause and merely serve to stimulate one another to better service. For some reason, the fact was overlooked that these divisions were at war among themselves; that the infantry was waging war against the cavalry, and the cavalry against the artillery, and so on; to such an extent that the whole army was disorganized and unable to make any progress against the common foe—sin. I am sure the Captain of our salvation would not be able to lead such a disorganized rabble into any notable victories over the forces of Satan!

> "The fact that the original church was one, and that the Bible condemns divisions, had no effect upon them. And the further glaring fact, visible almost everywhere, of small towns, hardly strong enough to support one church, with two or more eking out a miserable existence, was without influence upon them. This worse than waste of the Lord's money, and the strength of the Lord's people, seemed never to have been seen by them"
>
> —M. M. Davis, *Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 63.

(3) Their much over-worked figure, however, was based upon the statement of Jesus in John 15:5, "I am

the vine, ye are the branches." On the basis of this text, these defenders of partyism were fond of drawing three figures, viz., a tree with trunk and branches, a vine with stem and branches, and a stream with its tributaries. They compared the church to a great tree with many branches; the denominations, they contended, are branches of the one church, or body, of which Paul speaks. This argument is still the favorite stock-in-trade of denominationalism. But, is there any foundation for such an analogy in the words of our text? In order to ascertain the correct exegesis, we shall study the text (1) *negatively*, (2) *positively*.

1. *What the text can not mean.* It is quite evident:

(1) *That Jesus makes no reference here to a church or churches*, for two reasons: (a) His words were addressed to the eleven in the upper room following the institution of the Lord's Supper and just preceding their departure to the Mount of Olives. Having made use of wine in the observance of the Supper, Jesus no doubt took occasion from that to say that He was the true vine, and to intimate that His blood was the real wine which gives strength to the soul. There is not even the slightest intimation that He referred to a church or group of churches. Such an inference is wholly unwarranted by anything He said during that entire memorable evening. (b) There was no church in existence at the time these words were spoken. The Jewish system of faith and worship, which was then in force and which remained in force until the day following when He nailed it to the cross, can not be spoken of as a "church" in the New Testament sense of the term. The church of Christ did not come into existence until more than fifty days later, Acts 2.

(2) *That the vine and branch theory as applied to denominationalism has no foundation either in Scripture or in fact.*

(a) Paul nowhere addresses the *Methodist branch* of the church, the *Presbyterian branch* of the church, or the *Baptist branch* of the church. Such expressions are not to be found in the New Testament.

(b) According to history, Episcopalianism was launched about the year 1521; Presbyterianism began about the year 1537; Baptist-ism, about the year 1611; Quakerism, about the year 1655; Methodism about the year 1729; Cumberland Presbyterianism, about the year 1810, etc. But the church of Christ came into existence in A. D. 30, in the sacred city of Jerusalem. Was this church without branches, then, for the first fifteen hundred years of its existence? Did the church bear no fruit during all that time?

> "Neither tree nor vine can maintain its life and bring forth fruit without branches; yet if these organizations are the branches, then it follows that the church was a branchless, fruitless, lifeless thing until they came into being. Since then, in one-third of that time, it has put forth a host of branches, and branches of branches, and branches of branches of branches until they have become so thick that we are inclined to think that the pruning-hook is necessary. Each of the branches differs in constitution, character, and fruit from all the others. Such a tree! such a tree!!"
>
> —Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 170.

(c) If the various denominations are branches of the tree, what constitutes the trunk? Someone replies, "The trunk is the church of Christ." This being true, I would not care to belong to any of the branches, but would prefer to belong to the trunk. Why should one desire to be-

long to any of the branches, when one can belong to the trunk?

(d) This tree is surely a theological monstrosity! It would surpass the fondest dreams of the late Luther Burbank. Here we have a tree with numerous branches: one bearing peaches (Methodists), another bearing pears (Presbyterians), another bearing apples (Baptists), another bearing apricots (Congregationalists), etc. Moreover, each branch has its sub-branches which bear different kinds of fruits. Here we have the picture of a great tree with more than two hundred branches and sub-branches, each branch and sub-branch different from the rest in character, constitution and fruit, yet all said to come from the same "incorruptible seed," the word of God, 1 Pet. 1:23.

(e) But we are told that this variety has been produced by grafting. In the process of grafting, however a branch is taken from one tree and grafted into another tree. Whence, then, came these denominations? Surely they were not taken from the church of Christ and grafted back into the church of Christ! There would be no use in taking a branch from a tree and grafting it back into the same tree. Then from what tree or vine were these branches taken? Or, to speak according to the figure, from what church did these branches come before they were grafted into the church of Christ? It will not do to say that they came from the world, for the simple reason they came from the world as *individuals*, not as *organizations*. Thus it will be seen that the vine and branch theory, as applied to denominationalism, has no foundation either in Scripture or in logic.

2. *What the text does mean.* Christianity is always described in the New Testament in terms of *personal*

relationship to a *personal* Savior. The gospel has only a *personal* appeal, and the acceptance of the gospel is a *personal* response to this appeal. Christianity proposes to save humanity, not *en masse*, but *individually*. We are told that even the final judgment will be a personal one—"who will render to every man according to his works," Rom. 2:6. The same general law applies to our text. Jesus proposes to teach by this analogy of the vine and the branches *the source of true discipleship;* and the lesson is that *union with Christ is necessary to Christian life, conduct, and fruit.* One explanation of the parable is that *Christ* is the Vine, the *apostles* the branches, and all *Christians* are the fruit. In view of the general purpose of the analogy, however, it seems that this exegesis is somewhat strained. If Christ is teaching the lesson of discipleship, the analogy must apply to all disciples. For this reason, we accept the interpretation commonly given, viz., that Christ is the *Vine*, all disciples who have accepted Him as Savior and who have been baptized into Him are the *branches*, and their *lives* are the fruitage. The whole parable sets forth Christ's relationships:

(1) *To the Father.* The Father is represented as the husbandman, or the *vine-dresser*.

> "It means one who has the care of a vineyard; whose office it is to nurture, trim and defend the vine, and who, of course, feels a deep interest in it's growth and welfare. Note, Matt. 21:33. The figure means that God gave, or appointed His Son *to be*, the source of all blessings to man; that all grace descends *through* Him, and that God takes care of all the branches of this vine— that is, all who are by faith united to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus and all His church He feels the deepest interest, and it is an object of great solicitude that His church *should* receive these blessings and bear much fruit."
>
> —Barnes, *Notes, in loco.*

(2) *To all Christians.* In this respect, Jesus is the Vine and all Christians are the branches. In this connection, it is brought out: (a) *that vital union with Christ is essential to Christian fruitage,* vv. 4-5. This union is begun when the believing penitent is baptized into Christ, Rom. 6:5-6, Gal. 3:27. (b) *That the true measure of discipleship is the measure of one's loyalty to the word of Christ in precept and in life.* "If ye abide in me, and *my words* abide in you," v. 7. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," v. 10. Compare John 6:63, John 15:7-10, Col. 3:16, 1 John 2:3-4, 3:24. (c) *That the Christian who abides constantly in the Word will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit,* v. 8. Also Gal. 5:22-25.

(3) *To all Christian works.* The fruits of the Spirit are the natural consequence of individual union with Christ. He is the Source of all good works. How true this is! Even those ethical and fraternal institutions, which flourish oftentimes, I fear, at the expense of the church, are duty bound to ascribe their works of benevolence and fraternalism to the spirit of Christianity in the world.

(4) *The negative condition,* or *lack* or relationship. This is described under the analogy of the vine, the dissevered branches and the fire. As the vine-dresser removes all branches that are dead, so God will, in the final judgment, take from His church all professed Christians who give no evidence by their lives that they are disciples of the Lord Jesus. He refers here, no doubt to such cases as that of Judas, the unbelieving Jews, the apostatizing disciples, and to all hypocrites and mere church-members. Rom. 2:4-11, Heb. 9:27-28. See also Matt. 24:24-30, 36-43. The judgment inflicted upon

Ananias and Sapphira is indicative of the retribution that will be visited upon all hypocrites in the great day of universal reckoning, Acts 5:1-11.

Conclusion: The following conversation, alleged to have taken place between a commercial traveler and a minister of the gospel, published in tract form, illustrates quite clearly the argument of this sermon. I take the liberty of reproducing the tract verbatim:

"Commercial Traveler—Sir, I heard you preach last night.

"Minister—Glad to know it. Hope you will come often.

"T.—What are you? A Baptist?

"M.—No.

"T.—A Methodist?

"M.—No.

"T.— To what denomination do you belong?

"M.—To none at all.

"T.—I mean what sect do you belong to?

"M.—I do not belong to any sect. The Bible speaks of sectarianism as one of the 'works of the flesh' with which Christians should have nothing to do.

"T.—Oh, well, I mean what branch of the church do you belong to?

"M.—I do not belong to any branch– I am a branch myself.

"T.—Are not all the denominations branches of the church?

"M.—Christ said: 'I am the vine and ye (meaning individual disciples) are the branches.'

"T.—But I have always thought that the denominations were the branches of the church.

"M.—If they are, then the church was without branches for the first fifteen hundred years of its existence. Strange, isn't it?

"T.—Why do you say that?

"M.—Because the oldest denomination, which is the Episcopal, did not begin till the year 1521. It follows, therefore, that if the denominations are the branches, the church had no branches till 1521. If it had no branches, it could not bear fruit, and must have been a lifeless, worthless thing.

"T.—That seems reasonable; but you have not yet told me what church you belong to.

"M.—I belong to the church of Christ.

"T.—Which church of Christ? The Methodist church of Christ, or the Presbyterian church of Christ, or the—

"M.—I belong simply to the church of Christ, or the church of God—the church the New Testament speaks of.

"T.—Are there not many churches?

"M.—Paul teaches that there is but one church.

"T.—In what way does he teach this?

"M.—Well, in 1 Cor. 12:20, he says there is but 'one body,' and in Col. 1:18, he says, 'the body is the church.'

"T.—By what name are members of this church called?

"M.—In the New Testament they are called 'Christians.'

"T.—Is that the name you wear?

"M.—It is.

"T.—Are you not, then, standing aloof from all other Christians?

"M.—No, indeed; I am associated with over a million disciples, who are content to be simply Christians—nothing more.

"T.—You puzzle me. How do you distinguish yourself from other Christians?

"M.—We do not distinguish ourselves from other Christians. We believe in the union of all Christians. Many, however, distinguish themselves from us by using party names.

"T.—Oh, well, there is nothing in a name.

"M.—Indeed. Are you a married man?

"T.—I am.

"M.—Suppose your wife were to adopt the name of another man?

"T.—That's a different matter.

"M.—Not at all. The church is referred to as the bride of Christ; don't you think all who belong to it should wear the name that honors Him?

"T.—Well, of course—eh—that is—well, that *will* do to think about. But look here, when you adopt the name 'Christian,' you imply that there are no other Christians.

"M.—No, no, no. We neither imply nor believe that. We

believe there are hundreds and thousands of Christians besides ourselves. We simply desire to be Christians only, and wear no party names.

"T.—Still, I think your name excludes others.

"M.—I can not see why you think so. When we wear the name 'Christian,' we do not mean that others are not Christians, but that we are. Do you think the Methodists imply by their name that others have no methods?

"T.—No, of course not.

"M.—Do the Baptists imply by their name that no others baptize?

"T.—Well, no; I suppose not.

"M.—Then, why should you think that we imply that there are no other Christians because we wear that name? We believe that all in Christ are Christians, and that all out of Christ are not Christians.

"T.—Well, you people are not as one-sided as I thought you were. I did not think you would admit that others were Christians.

"M.—I am glad to inform you that we do. All who are in Christ have a right to the same name as well as we. We simply desire all Christ's people to throw away party names and party creeds and party prejudices, and do as the Bible commands, and wear Bible names, and 'dwell together in unity.'

"T.—That is all reasonable and fair; I think I shall have to come to hear you preach again next Sunday. Good-bye.

"M.—Good-bye, sir—glad I met you." (Conversation between a commercial traveler and a preacher, overheard on a railway train, published in tract form, *The Church He Belonged To*, by D. H. Petree).

My sinner friend, one thing is certain—you can not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit as long as you are out of Christ; and you can not be *in Christ* as long as you are out of His church, because His church is His body. Those who are in Christ are in the body of Christ, and vice versa You can not be a Christian outside of the *church*, for

the simple reason that you can not be a Christian outside of *Christ*. You may be a good moral man and a good citizen, but the fact remains that, if you are not in Christ, you are not a Christian. You become united with Christ when you believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess His name publicly, and are baptized into Him, Gal. 3:27. The Lord then adds you to the church, which is His body, Acts 2:47. This is the church which I hold up before you at this time. I am not pleading with you to unite with any denomination, or any "branch" of the church, because the true church has no branches. I am appealing to you to accept Christ as your Savior, to become united with Him, and to thus become a member of His body, the church. Will you not come while we sing?

XIV

THE ETERNAL WORD

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-14.

Text: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—Matt. 24:35.

A word is defined as "the sign of an idea." Words, taken together in their logical and grammatical connections, constitute the intelligible expression of thought from one mind to another. The word of God is the expression of infinite thought to man, in terms of human comprehension.

A word is apparently the most feeble and vanishing of things. In effect, however, it is potent and abiding. It is like a puff of air, gone with the wind, but sure to go somewhere; and, like Longfellow's arrow, bound to return with a blessing or a curse. A feeble thing it is, yet a word, it is said, would have held back the floods of war in 1914. A word separates man from the lower creatures of earth, and makes him a being of heavenly origin and destiny.

Two thousand years ago a little old man, physically deformed, sat in a cold Roman dungeon, writing some words on parchment. The government which had imprisoned him was the most powerful the world had ever known. It ruled from the Indus to Hispania, and from the Sahara to distant Britain. One day there was a knock at the prison door; the executioner entered, bound the apostle, led him out the Appian Way, placed

his head upon the block; and the head was severed from the body. Thus died Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. The name of his executioner is unknown today. The prison in which he was confined is in ashes and dust. The Roman Empire has passed into history. But the *words* which Paul wrote on that piece of parchment still live and, during the centuries, have brought peace to countless souls. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Jesus, Himself, recognized the mighty power of words. Quote Matt. 4:4, 6, 7, 10; 12:36-37; Mark 8:38; Luke 4:32, 24:19; John 6:68, 5:24, 8:31-32, 6:63, 8:51, 14:15. He was recognized to be "a prophet mighty in deed and word," Luke 24:19.

If a word spoken by man is so powerful, what must be the potency of the word of God! The sin of this age is indifference to, neglect of, and disrespect for the word of God. People trifle with it at will, not knowing that it is Heaven's eternal, miracle-working, *executing* Power.

The purpose of this sermon is to create respect for God's word, to deepen faith in it, and to lead men and women to obey it. Let us learn a few things from the Scriptures about the eternal Word.

1. *The world was created by the word of God.*

(1) It has been said that the greatest questions of life are these three: Who am I? Whence came I? Whither am I bound? In seeking a solution of these problems, men have pushed out into unknown seas of speculation, some of them never to return. To solve them, the sleeping dust of centuries has been disturbed, monuments have been excavated, vast libraries uncovered, and many lives have been sacrificed.

> "Man is a restless creature. There is a spark of eternal fire in his breast which is never satisfied. It is constantly urging him into strange places—pointing out difficult roads—creating in his mind fancies which taunt him with their interrogations. If we are normal, we are all Columbuses; the pull of the horizon is tremendous; few can resist the challenge of mystery."—Meade E. Dutt, *Jesus Christ in Human Experience*, p. 12.

(2) Scientists and philosophers, in all ages, have speculated about the beginning of things. Science however, is out of place in trying to solve the problem of origins. It is the business of science to tell us how things *operate*, not how they *began*. Philosophy, likewise, is helpless before the stupendousness of such a task. What man saw the world created? What man was present when the chaotic mists hung across the morning of creation? There is only one book qualified to give us the facts regarding the origin of the physical universe—the Bible. It is so qualified because it is a book from God. The Bible says that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1).

(3) The Bible does not teach creation without a first cause. It assigns all things to God and to the power of His word. John 1:1-3, Psa. 33:6-9. Creation is defined as that act of the triune God by which He made, without the use of pre-existing materials and for His own glory, the whole visible and invisible universe. In this creation, the Father was the *originating* cause, the Logos the *executing* cause, and the Spirit the *realizing* cause. The means used by the Godhead, in this divine process of creation, was the Word. The clause, "And God said," is found nine consecutive times in the first chapter of Genesis, and that which God said, the psalmist tells us, "was done."

(4) *Heb. 11:3.* Some years ago the scientists brought forth a theory of "spontaneous generation," i. e., that matter of its own accord, at some time in the past, generated first life. Experiments proved the theory false. The writer of *Hebrews* says positively that existing things were not formed out of pre-existing matter, but that the Creator *spoke* the universe into existence—a *truth* which we must accept *by faith.* In fact, we can accept it in no other way. Before a thing is fully established, it must be established by the testimony of eye-witnesses. No man, therefore, is capable of telling us how the world began. Science, in the ultimate, rests on faith! Our faith, however, rests not upon the word of the scientist, but upon the written word of God. Heb. 11:3 indicates, not a renovation of pre-existent matter, but "a primary and absolute creation of matter." (Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, p. 24).

(5) *Psalm 148:1-6.* "He commanded and they were created"—what system of natural religion or philosophy attains such a sublime conception! How superior to the modernist's purely mechanical theory of evolution! Contemplate, for a moment, the superiority of thought, the power of words, the control of mind over matter!

2. *The world is sustained in its various processes by the same Word.* Surely no one would claim that the world operates by chance. What lies behind its order and precision, its wonderful succession of natural causes and effects? Quote Heb. 1:1-3 and 2 Pet. 3:5-7. God covenanted with Noah hat universal judgment should never again take the form of water (Gen. 8:20-22). The last judgment will be that of fire (Matt. 3:10-12, 2 Pet. 3:11-13, 2 Thess. 1-7-10). When God speaks the Word the heavens will fold like a parchment and the earth as a

vesture, and the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, to render judgment.

3. *The miracles of "holy men of old" were performed by speaking the word of God.*

(a) It is quite a fad in these days to dismiss a miracle, or "sign," as an incident which might be explained by "natural laws," provided that all natural laws pertaining to the incident were fully known. This is not the Scripture idea of a miracle. There must be within an incident a supernatural element before there is a miracle and any incident that can be explained wholly by so-called "natural laws" is not a miracle, in the Scriptural sense of the term. The supernatural element necessary to the performance of a miracle is the word of God.

(b) *Num. 20:7-13.* God told Moses to *speak* to the rock before the eyes of the children of Israel. Moses disobeyed, and merely *smote* the rock with his rod. The rod, being in itself an emblem of the word of God, was sufficient to bring about the miraculous end in view; but the use of the rod, in disobedience to the positive command of Jehovah, brought punishment upon Moses. For his failure to sanctify God in the eyes of the people of Israel, by using the word of God to perform the miracle, Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan in his physical body.

(c) *Josh. 10:12-13.* What would the destructive critics have done without this story! It has afforded them so much merriment! But is it unreasonable? The word of God created the world—hence the word of God is the only power that can temporarily set aside its forces and processes. *When the word of God is spoken, all nature obeys.*

(d) *In Matt. 17:20,* Jesus tells us that if we have faith as a grain of mustard-seed we can move mountains. But faith comes from, and depends upon, the word of God (Rom. 10:17). If the word of God were to come to me, telling me to command Pike's Peak to move, I believe that Pike's Peak would move. But no doubt Pike's Peak will stay right where it is now, if I merely speak my own word.

4. *Jesus was the embodiment of the word of God in flesh and blood.*

(a) *John 1:14.* The mystery of godliness—the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

(b) *John 1:18.* Jesus was the Logos *inwardly,* in that He has existed from all eternity "in the bosom of the Father." The manger of Bethlehem was not the place of Christ's beginning. Quote Mic. 5:12, John 8:58 and 17:5, Col. 1:15-17. What really happened at Bethelehem was that a pre-existent Personality took upon himself a new order of being—the immaterial passed over into the realm of the material—the Word became flesh. (1 Tim 3:16). Those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus must explain away the Scriptural doctrine of His pre-existence.

(c) Jesus was the Logos *outwardly* in that it was His specific mission to reveal the Father to us. (John 14:9-10). He was the "very image" of the Father's substance (Heb. 1:3).

5. *Jesus performed His miracles by speaking the word of God.*

(a) Feeding the multitudes (Matt. 14:19).

(b) Stilling the tempest (Matt. 8:26).

(c) Healing the sick (Matt. 8:3 and 8).

(d) Casting out demons (Matt. 8:32, Mark 1:25-27).

(e) Raising the dead (Luke 7:14, John 11:43).

(f) Thus it can be seen that Jesus spoke the Word and the miracle was immediately performed. He gave no treatments, either present or absent. He did not need to see His patient more than once, and He made no charges for His services. How different from modern "healers"!

6. *What became of the Word power of God when Jesus returned to Heaven?*

(a) Quote John 16:7-15, Luke 24:49, Acts 2:1-4. He dispatched the word of God to His apostles on the day of Pentecost, through the Holy Spirit. The apostles spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4).

(b) The apostles, in turn, embodied the word of God in the New Testament Scriptures. Quote Gal. 1:6-12, Eph. 6:17, 1 Cor. 14:37, 1 Cor. 2:6-13, Rev. 22:18-19.

(c) The gospel, written or preached, is the *power* of God unto salvation in the present dispensation (Rom. 1:16). It is God's power because it is His word (Luke 8:11, 1 Pet. 1:22-23, Jas. 1:18).

(d) In every case of conversion, as recorded in *Acts*, there is specific mention that the gospel was preached (Acts 2:14-37, 8:5-12, 8:30-35, 9:6, 22:10, 10:34-43, 11:14, 16:14-15, 16:32, 18:8). The Word, written or spoken, makes believers (John 2:22, 6:63, 17:20, 20:30-31).

7. *The apostles performed miracles by speaking the word of God.*

(a) The lame man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3:6).

(b) Aeneas at Lydda (Acts 9:34).

(c) Tabitha, in the city of Joppa (Acts 9:40)

The word of God can not be resisted by material things. When it is spoken, all nature obeys (John 1:1; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:5). It is Heaven's miracle-working power.

The word of God can be resisted by man's will (Rom. 13:2). It can be neglected by man (Heb. 2:1-4). To resist the Word is to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51-53), and to nullify the power of God.

All the confusion that exists at present in Christian doctrine has been caused by departure from "the pattern of sound words." Let us be careful to maintain a strictly Scriptural phraseology.

Let us settle our problems by what the Word teaches. Measured by this divine standard, rather than the standard of opinion or of expediency, such problems as "open membership," "federation," "interchurch movements," "centralization," etc., would soon cease to trouble the brotherhood. Let us be faithful to the slogan of old, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

> "Toward the close of the last century, before the days of the great Bible Societies, there was, for a season, a woeful want of Bibles in America, caused partly by the prevalence of French infidelity, and partly by the general religious apathy which followed the Revolutionary War. In that period a man went into a book-store in Philadelphia and asked to buy a Bible. 'I have none,' said the bookseller. 'There is not a copy for sale in the city; and I can tell you further,' said he (for he was of the French way of thinking), 'in fifty years there will not be a Bible in the world.' The rough answer of the customer was, 'There will be plenty of Bibles in the world a thousand years after you are dead and gone to hell.' " (*The Christian Age*).

"Heaven and earth shall pass away," said Jesus, "but my words shall not pass away."

XV

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3.

Text: "....the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—1 Tim. 3:15.

The text and its context. The text follows a chapter of instructions from Paul to Timothy regarding the qualifications of bishops and deacons of the local church. The apostle's thought is that, in view of the tremendous tasks and responsibilities of the local church, only those men who have a high regard for the church should be ordained elders and deacons.

> "His design seems to be to impress Timothy with a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in relation to the church; of the responsibilities of those who preside over it; and of the necessity of care and caution in the selection of proper officers. To do this, he reminds him that the truth of God—that revealed truth which He has given to save the world—is entrusted to the church; that the church is designed to preserve it pure, to defend it, and to transmit it to future times; and that, therefore, every one to whom the administration of the affairs of the church is entrusted should engage in this duty with a deep conviction of responsibility."
>
> —Barnes, *Notes, in loco.*

The same thought is expressed again in 2 Tim. 2:2. The first qualification for office in the local church, be it that of evangelist, elder or deacon, is that a man be *faithful.* Faithful to what? To the revealed truth of God. He may not be cultured, nor eloquent, but he certainly must be *faithful.*

1. *The text explained.* (1) The text is in direct conflict with a present-day platitude that is being bandied about by shallow egotists, that "the Bible needs no defense." They say, "The Bible is its own defense." True, the Bible is its own defense just as a sword is a weapon of defense; but this Bible, which is the "sword of the Spirit," just like a literal sword, must be capably and intelligently handled by *faithful* men, Eph. 6:17.

(2) In the revelation of His will to man, God has always operated through faithful men, 2 Pet. 1:21, Heb. 1:1. This revelation begun through holy men of old, was continued through the prophets, and was consummated through Jesus and the apostles, 1 Cor. 2:10-13, 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

(3) If the text means anything, it means that to the church, with her evangelists, elders and deacons, has been entrusted the task of preserving, protecting and defending the truth of God, as revealed in the Bible.

(4) Two *metaphors* are used here to convey this idea: (a) The church is said to be the *pillar* of the truth. In other words, the church is the support of the truth of God, as a pillar supports a building. The *truth itself* needs no support; it has all heaven behind it. But the *truth as acknowledged in the world* does need support. Heresy must be resisted, and the truth proclaimed. (b) The church is also said to be the *ground* of the truth, i. e., the *foundation*, or *stay*, thereof.

(5) In other words, God has established His church in the world, in the very midst of the world, to hold up the truth as a pillar supports a roof; and to keep it unshaken as a firm foundation supports a building. Were it not for the support and steadiness given divine truth through-

out the ages, by the society of the faithful, it would long ago have vanished from the earth.

2. *The truth defined.*

(1) *By exclusion.* What *truth* is referred to by the apostle? What truth is supported by the church?

(a) It is not *political* truth. The church should have no political connections. Church and state should forever remain separate and apart from each other, Matt. 22:21. Most certainly the church is not the pillar and ground of ever-shifting political theories.

(b) It is not *philosophy.* Philosophy has been defined as "the search of a blind man in a dark cellar for a black cat that isn't there." Philosophy is shifting; it has no fixed values. What may be good philosophy to-day may be considered bad philosophy tomorrow. Philosophy is largely guess-work; it is always changing. Truth, on the contrary, is fixed; it is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

(c) It is not *science,* though one might be led to think so, judging from the utterances of the modern pulpit. Surely the church was never intended to be a scientific assembly. It is not an institution for the development of sociology, biology, physiology, psychology, or any other "ology." Though the Bible has always anticipated the latest science, it does not pretend to be a text-book on science. Science is just as shifting and uncertain as philosophy; it changes with every decade. Therefore the church is not the pillar and ground of scientific truth, nor is the church obligated in any way to listen to the wild theories of so-called scientists.

(d) It is not *theology.* Theology is at best nothing more than the Word of God diluted by human opinion; divine truth strained through the porous substance of

man's intelligence. Theology is "skimmed milk." Theology has cursed the church for many centuries; it has divided Christendom into warring sects. It sent the true church into the wilderness and in her place established the apostate church upon the seven-hilled city. It has always engendered creed-making, speculation and sectarianism.

(2) *By inclusion.* What, then, is the truth, or system of truth, supported by the church?

(a) It is the *word of Christ* as epitomized in the *facts, commands* and *promises* of the gospel. The gospel is the *power* of God unto salvation because it is the revelation of the *truth* of God.

(b) The gospel has *three facts:* the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-4. It has three *commands:* believe, repent, and be baptized, 2 Thess. 1:8, Acts 16:31, 2:38. It has *three promises:* remission of sins, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, Acts 2:38, 1 Cor. 6:19, Rom. 6:23.

(c) The gospel has one supreme *truth*, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. 16:16, which rests upon the supreme *fact* that He arose from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:20. It has one supreme *command*, "Hear ye Him," Matt. 17:5. It has one supreme *reward*, eternal life. John 3:16.

(3) *By conclusion.* The truth which the church is obligated to preserve, protect and defend throughout all ages is the *gospel*, with its facts, commands and promises. The gospel is the supreme system of truth for man's consideration. There are two things that never change; they are always *static;* one is human nature; the other, the gospel of Christ.

3. *The truth preserved.*

(1) I pause here to correct an error. I heard a Christian minister advance the following argument recently: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is our creed. We are not concerned at all about your views as to *how* Jesus is the Christ; all that we require is that you believe and confess that He is the Christ, and we ask no more questions." In a sense this is true, but not as this man intended his words to be taken. When an alien sinner comes forward and makes the good confession, a Christian preacher will ask no further questions. *He takes it for granted that the person who makes the confession is not confessing a human Christ.* If Jesus is the Christ, there isn't any *how* about the matter. The word "Christ" means "the Anointed One." It follows that if Jesus is the Christ, He is the Anointed One of God. And whether or not you believe that He is the Christ depends upon whether or not you believe *He arose from the dead.* Matt. 16:18. Had Jesus gone down into the grave and not come forth, He could not have been the Christ, and the gates of Hades (the grave) would have prevailed against this truth (rock) which Peter had confessed. But the fact that He did arise from the dead proves Him to be the Christ, 1 Cor. 15:12-19, Rom. 1:4. Hence the gates of Hades did not prevail against the fundamental truth of Christianity. The above stated clerical pronouncement is just a sample of the sophistry which prevails to an alarming extent in the modern pulpit.

(2) There are *four* things the church must do in order to preserve the truth of Christ and hand it down unimpaired to all future generations. The church must:

(a) *Hold fast the pattern of sound words*, i. e., maintain strictly Scriptural phraseology, 2 Tim. 1:13. We must "call Bible things by Bible names," Why talk about "modes" of baptism? "Mode" means action, or manner; and baptism is a mode in itself; change the mode, and it ceases to be baptism and becomes something else. When I tell you I am going to *walk* to the door, I do not mean that I am going to take my choice of walking, jumping or crawling, If I do not *walk*, I do something else. Again, why talk of "infant baptism?" Some churches practise infant sprinkling, infant pouring or infant christening; but I know of only one that really practises infant baptism (the Greek Church). Again, why such a distinction as "formal" and "vital" Christianity? All obedience to Christ is *vital*, whether it pertains to an institutional act such as baptism, or to an ethical obligation such as the law against stealing. Again, we even hear talk about a "Disciples' Church." I have just recently discovered that there is a "Disciples' denomination," although I most emphatically disavow any connection with it. That big "D" in "Disciples" is just as sectarian as the big "B" in "United Brethren," or the big "F" in "Friends," or the big "S" in "Latter-Day Saints." Also, let us quit drawing such distinctions as that of "clergy" and "laity." The New Testament makes no such distinction. Such phraseology is borrowed from Protestant theology and causes untold confusion.

(b) *Keep faithfully the ordinances of Christ*, which are three in number: *baptism*, Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:16; *the Lord's Supper*, Matt. 26:26-29, 1 Cor. 11:23-26; and *the Lord's Day*, Mark 16:9, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 14:37, 16:2, Rev. 1:10. These are ordinances of Christ, not

of the church. They either picture or commemorate one or more of the facts of the gospel. They are sacred trusts which have been committed to the church for safekeeping. When an ambassador is appointed to represent the government of the United States at a foreign court, he is held responsible for the safekeeping of the laws and institutions of America by that foreign government. So the church will be held responsible for the safekeeping of the ordinances of Christ which have been entrusted to her care. The church has no authority to alter or amend these ordinances; but she is obligated to see that they are observed in the way and manner outlined in the New Testament. To me it is the height of folly for any church board or council to even discuss such a question as the reception of the "pious unimmersed" into church fellowship; the Lord Jesus Christ settled that question long ago, Acts 10:47-48, Mark 7:13, Col. 2:8.

(c) *Speak the things which befit sound doctrine*, Tit. 2:1. Doctrine is *teaching*, and vice versa. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. 28:20. *All the confusion that exists in Christendom to-day has been brought about by departure from sound doctrine.* When the "inner consciousness" is made the supreme authority in spiritual matters, the result is *rationalism;* when *feelings* are made the source of authority, the result is *mysticism;* when the *fallible opinions* of church councils are made authoritative, the result is *traditionalism.* Mysticism, rationalism and traditionalism are the members of the unholy trinity which has cursed the church for sixteen centuries. When the word of Christ as revealed in the New Testament is made the standard of authority, the result is

Christian faith and practice. The Bible makes mention of only one person who looked upon the Word as a "dead letter," Luke 16:27-31. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"—Col. 3:16.

(d) *Exemplify the fruits of the Spirit in her conduct*, Gal. 5:22-24. "Ye are the salt of the earth"—Matt. 5:13. "Ye are the light of the world," Matt. 5:14. "Ye are living epistles," 2 Cor. 3:2. "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. 3:18. "In your faith supply virtue," etc., 2 Pet. 1:5-7. "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only," Jas. 1:22.

4. *The truth proclaimed.*

(1) The mission of the church is two-fold: (a) To preserve the truth, and (b) To proclaim the truth to the whole world. All other duties are comprised within these two basic obligations.

(2) The church is working under a commission which came directly from the lips of the Master, and which is as broad as the whole world, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16. The church can be satisfied with nothing less than the evangelizing of the whole human family, Rom. 10:11-15. This gospel of the kingdom must be preached for a testimony unto all nations before "the end" shall come, Matt. 24:14.

Conclusions: (1) The truth of Christ comprises all *essentials* of divine revelation and legislation, but it does not include a single *non-essential.* This body of truth has *seven* essentials: one body, one hope, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, Eph. 4:4-6.

(2) These seven essentials of divine truth are *static;* they never change. They are the same in China, as in

the United States; and preachers in China are working under the same commission as preachers in Missouri.

(3) Since the truth of Christ is *constant*, never varying, never changing to meet "the needs of the age," it follows that the *church can not be otherwise than dogmatic in proclaiming this truth to men.* The religious, as well as the secular, world needs to learn that there are some things which have been settled for all time. The church must take her stand on these essentials of truth and *stand there*, even though all hell moves to drive her from this sure foundation. She need not be *intolerant* of anything save *sin* and *error.*

(4) It was this very *exclusiveness* of Christianity which made it so powerful in early times. It claimed to be the *only* system which offered salvation from sin, and eternal life. Its Author said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me," John 14:6. In other words, "I am not merely a way, nor one of the ways, nor a better way; I am the *only* way back to the Father." "I have not come to bring you something nearer the truth than some other teacher has brought you; I bring you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." "I alone am the life, because I alone have the power to lay down my life and take it up again. I am come that you might have life more abundantly." This was the message of the apostles. It was dogmatic to the core. It offered no compromise; brooked no opposition. With the apostles, it was Christ or nothing. It was this exclusiveness of Christianity which gave it the power to conquer the world within three centuries after its birth. With this uncompromising spirit it encountered Pharisaic Judaism right it in its stronghold and battered it to pieces. With

this spirit it crossed the Hellespont, met the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill, and swept their petty systems into oblivion. With this spirit it marched on triumphantly to imperial Rome, where it met the gods of the Forum in a death grapple, hurled them from their marble pedestals, toppled their thrones and temples into the dust, and buried paganism in a nameless grave. With the same spirit it would soon conquer the world to-day. But this spirit will not return to the church until God's people awaken to their responsibility and duty; not until the church becomes in fact *the pillar and ground of the truth.*

XVI

THE MEANS TO SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Scripture Reading: John 8:31-36.

Text: "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:31-32.

In this text, Jesus reveals the fact that the *truth* is the means to spiritual freedom. I am discussing, therefore, spiritual freedom as obtained through knowledge of and submission to the *truth*.

1. In using the word *truth*, I do not have reference to any one or more abstract statements of truth. I have reference to the sum total of truth—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

2. I refer to the *truth as pertains to the everlasting salvation of a human being;* in other words, the truth that must be known and obeyed in order to accomplish redemption of spirit and body in heaven.

3. I am not using the word *truth* with reference to science, politics, education, law, etc. It has been demonstrated that knowledge of the truth as pertains to medicine, art, music, law, politics, sociology, or any human branch of education, can not free the soul from the bondage of sin. I am discussing the truth which frees the human being from sin and death.

4. Neither am I using the word *truth* with reference to theological dogmas and controversies. Speculation serves to obscure the truth rather than to reveal it.

5. Neither am I speaking with reference to *corruptions of the truth*. The opposite of *truth* is *error*. Spiritual error is *heresy*. We have a great many systems to-day, claiming to be systems of Christian faith and worship, which contain degrees of truth, more or less confused with error. For example, Christian Science, Adventism, Methodism, Presbyterianism, Calvinism, etc.

6. I am discussing the *truth* which Jesus had in mind in the words of our text, viz., the truth as regards the moral and spiritual welfare of man.

I. The first part of our text is: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." In other words, *one is a disciple of Christ to the degree that he abides in the word of Christ*. It matters not how you measure your discipleship, God measures it by your fidelity to the word of Christ. Note that it does not say: (1) If you *feel* just right, "then are ye truly my disciples"; (2) If you do what you *think to be right*, etc.; (3) If you abide in what you have been *brought up to believe*, etc.; (4) If you abide in your *father's religion*, or your *mother's religion*, etc.; (5) If you abide in your *opinions*, etc. The text says none of these things. Men can not be saved by what they think, nor by what they have been brought up to believe, nor by their feelings. "Hell will be paved with good intentions," is a true statement. The word of Christ is the only standard by which we shall be judged in the Divine Court. We are not merely to *give intellectual assent* to the Word, nor merely to *believe* it, but we must *abide in it*. Quote John 6:63; Luke

9:26 and 24:35. We are disciples of Christ, in the sight of Heaven, to the degree that we abide in His word.

II. The second part of our text is a corollary of the first, and reads, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." From this statement, we infer:

1. *That the truth exists, and is to be found, somewhere;* i. e., the truth as pertains to one's eternal salvation. Jesus speaks of knowing the truth, and how can we know the truth if it has not been revealed, and is not to be found, somewhere? There is an undercurrent of skepticism to-day even among those who claim to be Christians. There seems to be a popular feeling that *a man can not know exactly whether he is pleasing God or not.* Pilate cynically exclaimed, "What is truth?" (John 18:33-38). The church is being cursed to-day, and Christianity hindered, by a multitude of Pilates. This attitude, by the way, is a prop of denominationalism. Because there is a popular attitude current that one denomination is liable to be just as near to the truth as another, *all efforts to ascertain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, have been abandoned.* For example, I do not practise infant sprinkling, whereas you do. In the nature of the case, we can not both be right. Truth does not contradict itself. In view of the fact that we directly controvert each other, in the matter of infant sprinkling, what should we do? Should we assume that it is possible for both of us to be right, and straightway forget our differences? Such an assumption would be erroneous and misleading. Compromise invariably results in multiplied error. Better take the New Testament, rather, and *find out who is right and who is wrong.* Differences between good and honest hearts can be

settled in just this way. The preponderance of evidence always favors the right side of a question, and that side should be taken, in any controversy, which is sustained by the preponderance of the evidence in the case. When men lay aside their prejudices, and make an honest attempt to get together on what the New Testament teaches, they invariably attain the end sought. The trouble with most present-day "union" movements is that the Bible, the standard of truth, is completely ignored.

2. *That the truth is accessible.* It is within reach of every accountable human being, and may be obtained by patient investigation. If one is blindly following opinion, sentiment, inclination, or theory, he is but a blind leader of the blind, and will be held doubly accountable in the judgment. The truth has been revealed—but how many people are seeking it? How many people to-day have made an honest investigation of the Scriptures to find out what to do to be saved? How many have patiently, and without prejudice, investigated the New Testament to find out what baptism is and what it is for? How many let day after day go by without even looking at a Bible! I warn you before God that you are responsible, and will be held responsible, for your failure to seek the truth. Isa. 35:8, Hosea 4:6. Hosea's portrayal of Israel's condition is very applicable to the condition of God's people in this day.

3. *That the truth is much to be desired*, because it is the only means to spiritual freedom. It frees us from the bondage of sin and death. It brings to view the conditions upon which remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, may all be obtained. A man is free spiritually to the degree that he abides in the truth

and walks by it; not by what he has been brought up to believe, nor by what he thinks to be right, nor by what he feels to be right; nor by the truth *as he sees it*, but by *the truth as it is*. Truth does not vary. Two people can not see the truth differently; when they both grasp the truth about a given proposition, they will *see it alike*. Everything, therefore, depends upon one's willingness to seek the truth and to walk by it. Responsibility in the sight of God is measured by a sinner's willingness (1) to seek the truth, (2) to keep his heart open to receive the truth, (3) to obey the truth, and (4) to walk according to the truth.

III. In view of the fact that the truth exists, and is accessible, and is much to be desired, our first and greatest question is: *Where is the truth to be found?* Truth as respects one's standing in the sight of God, and one's salvation and hope of eternal life, must necessarily be *revealed* truth. In the very nature of the case, it could not be merely an *evolution* of human genius, or of the "inner consciousness" of man, else it might not be in every instance, the truth. That which man evolves, of his own accord, and out of his own genius, is liable to error. Therefore the *truth* as regards one's eternal redemption must have been a *revelation* from the Source of all truth, a system of teaching given by an *infallible* Person, and consequently an *infallible* system of teaching. I, therefore, draw these inferences:

1. The *truth* as regards one's soul, its origin, conduct, and destiny, must have been *revealed*. Therefore we can not go to science, literature, philosophy, nor anything that man, of his own accord, has said or written, for it.

2. Having been revealed, it is necessarily *infallible*. Therefore we can not go to written creeds, disciplines

and confessions of faith for it. They, at best, are but systems of dogmatic theology, formulated by uninspired men.

3. Being infallible, it must be *authoritative.* Being authoritative, it must have come from One who has all the authority in Christianity, and from those to whom He has seen fit to delegate authority to reveal it. This is exactly what the Bible teaches and claims for itself. See Matt. 17:5, 28:18; John 14:6-12, 9:46-47, 17:6-17, 14:16-17, 15:26-27, 14:26-27, 16:13-15, 20:21-23; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:9-16, 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12; Col. 3:16; 1 John 2:3-5. The Bible is, therefore, called the "word of truth," i. e. it does not merely *contain* the truth; it *is* the truth, from Genesis to Revelation (Psa. 119:43, 2 Cor. 6:7, Eph. 1:13, Col. 1:5, Jas. 1:18).

4. It naturally follows that one can not be loyal to Christ, who was the embodiment of the truth in human flesh (John 14:6), without being loyal to the Word of truth which He revealed through the Holy Spirit and through inspired men. The knowledge of Jesus which we possess is that obtained from the testimony presented in the Word (John 20:30-31, Rom. 10:11-17). We know Him as a personal Christ, as an historical Christ, as an ascended, reigning, saving, and interceding Christ, through the testimony of His word of truth. Jesus makes His will known to us through the Word (Rom. 10:6-8), revealed by the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit exercises His power to convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment through this same Word preached by faithful men (John 16:7-11, 2 Cor. 5:19-20, 2 Tim. 2:2). To the Bible we must go for the truth, and to the New Testament in particular for the truth complete and per-

fect, as revealed in Christ, and sufficient to redeem the soul from the bondage of sin and death (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

5. One can not always follow (1) what he has been brought up to believe, (2) what is taught from the pulpit, as some preachers make it their special business to confuse their hearers; (3) what he thinks to be right, nor (4) what he would like to believe; because, in so doing, he might not be following the truth. One must read, study, obey and follow the New Testament, and face God, in all honesty, on one's own conclusions, decisions, and conduct. One can depend implicitly upon the word of Christ, as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

IV. In the last place, what should be our attitude towards the truth as found in the New Testament? We should

1. *Be receptive to it.* (1) Hosea 4:6. To *reject* knowledge is an offense against God. (2) Luke 8:11-15. In this parable, Jesus teaches distinctly that spiritual fruit can be produced only in a *good and honest heart.* We can not expect much permanent results when the word of God falls upon a worldly heart, or an impenitent heart, or a prejudiced heart, or a proud heart, but we can expect the fruits of the Spirit when the Word falls in a good and honest heart. (3) Matt. 13:13-17, Acts 28:25-29. People have been very much the same, in the respect of rejecting spiritual knowledge, in all ages. Prejudice is one of Satan's most effective weapons. 2 Cor. 4:4. (4) Acts 17:10-12. Note that the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonicans in that they kept their hearts open to receive the truth, and were willing to investigate for themselves. (5) Acts 18:24-26. Note that Apollos was willing to be instructed in the way

of the Lord more perfectly. (6) We should be willing to listen to what the other fellow has to say, and to compare his position impartially with what the Bible teaches, in order to arrive at a satisfactory and Scriptural position.

2. *Put the truth above opinions.* The cause of Christ is greatly hindered to-day by bits of "pious profanity" which are bandied about in popular phraseology, and which have been formulated to "bolster up" denominationalism. Some of these popular platitudes are: (1) "There isn't anything in a name." The Bible teaches that salvation depends upon a name; and that to wear any other name in preference to this one exclusive, divine name is carnal (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-4; Col. 3:17). (2) "One church is as good as another." There is not one single passage of Scripture that will justify this statement. The Bible, on the other hand, recognizes *one*, and *only one*, church. (Rom. 16:17, Matt. 16:18, Eph. 4:4). (3) "We can not have Christian unity, because God never intended for us to see alike." The Bible teaches just the opposite. It says, "Let there be no divisions among you," and, "Mark them that are causing divisions" (1 Cor. 1:10, Rom. 16:17). (4) "I have never been immersed, and I am satisfied." The question is not, Are *you* satisfied? but, Is *Christ* satisfied with you? What does the Bible say about it? See John 3:5, Matt. 7:21-27, John 14:15, 1 John 2:3-5. (5) "My mother's religion is good enough for me." But what does Jesus say? See Matt. 10:34-38; 12:50.

3. *Bow in submission to the truth.* Do not allow sentiment, opinion, inclination, or prejudice to prevent obedience to the truth. Jesus has become the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9). There will be just two classes in the Judgment: those

who have *done*, and those who have *not done*, what God, through Christ, commands (1 Cor. 3:11-14, Matt. 7:21-27, Rev. 22:14).

4. *Worship where the truth is preached.* I utterly detest the man who, on moving into a community, keeps his ear to the ground for a time to find out which is the most popular church in it, and then unites with that church because it is, for some superficial reason, the most popular. The church of Christ is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). I want to worship, not with that congregation which happens to have a particularly fine pulpit orator, or the best and finest pipe organ and vested choir; not with that congregation where I imagine the people to be most congenial; not particularly where sentimentality would lead me; but *with that congregation which stands for and preaches the truth.* I want to belong to that church body which boldly presents the truth as found in the New Testament, because I expect to be judged, in the end, by my fidelity, in both life and teaching, to the truth as revealed through Christ and His apostles.

5. *Proclaim the truth from the housetops.* We can not be for Christ unless we are for Him *aggressively.* "Billy" Sunday says: "When the apostle Paul went into a community, he had either a revival or a riot." I have come to the conclusion that the Christian preacher who is not having the one or the other is not aggressively presenting the truth. We must learn not to present the truth in such a manner as to give an audience the impression that we are *apologizing* for what we say. One should not claim to be *infallible*, either in pulpit or pew, but one must be *positive.* The world needs a positive message, and that is the precise thing which a full gospel

affords. Let us preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity. The church of the living God must be a *militant* body, powerful in her ability to wield the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Her war-cry should be:

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul,
Stedfast and sure while the billows roll;
Fastened to the rock which can not move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love."

A poet has written:

"For modes of faith let senseless bigots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

This couplet is a fair example of the lamentable indifference to the truths of Christianity which prevails to-day, not only among men of the world, but among professing Christians. The man who contends, "It makes no difference what church you belong to, if you are sincere; all are working for the same place," by the same process of reasoning could logically plead for idolatry, because, according to his view, it "doesn't matter" just so long as the worshipper is sincere. Surely no one would argue that, because Paul *thought* he was right in persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem and in foreign cities, he really *was* right. Our Lord shows that it *does* matter whether or not we know and obey the truth; furthermore, that indifference to revealed truth is sinful, because all could know the truth if they would but seek it without prejudice and with a desire to obey it (John 8:31-32, 18:37, 17:17).

F. W. Robertson has written: "We talk much of toleration. If we mean by that a generous sympathy with the different forms of opinion, then it is Christian. If toleration means compassion for frailty and a willingness ever

to make a distinction between tempted weakness and deliberate evil, then toleration is nothing more than another name for the mind of Christ. But if it means that we are to reckon one form of opinion as good as another, and look upon sin merely as a disease against which we can not feel indignation, then unquestionably Christianity has in it no toleration..... The price of being true is the cross. The warrior of truth must not expect success. What have we to do with popularity? Sow for it, and you will have it. But if you wish it, or wish for peace, you have mistaken your calling—you must not be a teacher of the truth; you must cut prejudice against the grain; you must leave medical, legal, theological truth to harder and nobler men, who are willing to take the martyr's cross, and win the martyr's crown."

Sinner friend, seek the truth, obey it, walk in it, and thereby gain that "abundant entrance" into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

XVII

THE STORY THAT NEVER GROWS OLD

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:26-40.

Text: "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture preached unto **him Jesus**." —Acts 8:35.

Every Bible student is familiar with the incidents narrated in the eighth chapter of *Acts of Apostles*. This one chapter of inspired history has been the basis of many pulpit messages in all ages of the history of Christianity. In its striking presentation of New Testament evangelism, we find the setting for this sermon.

In the opening verse of this chapter, we read that the church at Jerusalem had been scattered abroad by persecutions, instigated primarily by Saul of Tarsus. We read again that "they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word." Among this number was Philip, formerly a deacon, but who now became an evangelist, and went down to the city of Samaria and "*proclaimed unto them the Christ.*" There was no atmosphere of the schools about this gospel preacher; I imagine that he possessed none of the scholastic degrees of that day; yet we know that he was a man full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:3-6). His messages stirred the entire city; multitudes heard the Word, "believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and were

baptized, both men and women;" and "there was much joy in that city."

When this meeting in Samaria was at its height, a peculiar incident occurred. An angel of the Lord appeared unto Philip, and told him to arise and to go toward the south until he came to the road that went down from Jerusalem to Gaza. It caused no feeling of disappointment or regret in Philip's heart to leave the big meeting and the immense crowds behind, because the divine messenger had spoken, and to him the word of God was law. He "arose and went" to the designated place without delay. We picture him walking up and down this designated thoroughfare, after a hot and dusty trip, wondering what his task would be, when suddenly he saw a chariot approaching. As the vehicle drew near, he could see that its only occupant was an Ethiopian, a black man; and that he was garbed in the panoply of state, indicating that he was a man of considerable authority in his country; and that he was reading from a roll of parchment. Here the Spirit got in His work, commanding Philip to join himself to the chariot. This he did, finding that the Ethiopian was the treasurer of his kingdom, that he was returning from Jerusalem whither he had gone to worship, and that he was reading a parchment copy of the Old Testament Scriptures. A conversation ensued. Finding that the eunuch was reading from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—that wonderful presentation of the suffering Lamb of God—at the Ethiopian's suggestion, Philip "opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, *preached unto him Jesus.*" The result was that the eunuch believed, confessed his faith, was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing.

That with which we are concerned in this sermon, however, is Philip's *message*. Christ was his message in the city—Christ was his message in the country. Christ was his message to the crowd—and Christ was his message to the individual. He preached Christ in sermon and exhortation in Samaria; and he preached Christ in conversation to the eunuch. Christ was his message to the man whose skin was white—and Christ was his message to the man whose skin was black. This was the only sermon that Philip knew—that Jesus of Nazareth had died, been buried, and had risen again on the third day, and that remission of sins had been promised to all mankind in His name upon specific conditions. This was the apostolic message, and must always be the supreme message of the Christian ministry.

The supreme message of Christianity is "Christ and Him crucified." Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the Door to the fold. He is the Chief Shepherd. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He is the Alpha and Omega, and the Author and Perfecter of our faith. He is the Head over all things to the church, and the Captain of our salvation. His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is the Rose of Sharon, also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the Son of the living God. Said Peter on Pentecost: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2: 36).

We hear much talk to-day about the "new era," "the new religion," and "the new orthodoxy." I am con-

vinced, however, that no adequate message can be substituted for that which the apostles preached. Humanity is still in sin, and Christ is the only Savior. As long as time lasts, there will be sin and death; and as long as there is sin and death, there must be need of a Savior. In fact there are conditions prevailing at the present moment which necessitate the aggressive presentation of this fundamental message. It shall be my purpose, in this sermon, to note these conditions, and to urge fidelity in both preaching and living to the tried and true fundamentals of our faith. This is no time to forsake the supreme message; rather it is a time when that message should be sounded out with unprecedented fervor.

1. *We need to preach Christ to-day because there is so much anarchy in the world.* Humanity always swings from one extreme to the other; and now that crowns are toppling and kings are in exile, the world stands face to face with universal lawlessness. Bolshevism is freedom gone mad; liberty converted into license. The ultimate tendency of the socialistic theory is towards free love in the home, anarchy in the state, and atheism in religion. It proposes, in the ultimate, the destruction of civilization and the foundation upon which our American democracy has been erected. Its philosophy is the pathetic, despairing cry of *Invictus*,

> "Out of the night that covers me,
> Dark as the pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul."

Socialism is constructed upon the impossible assumption that all men are equal. This is not true. Men are not equal—morally, spiritually, physically, nor intel-

lectually. They are equal in one sense, and in only one—in the sense that one soul is worth as much as another in the sight of God. This means that men should have, in so far as possible, equal opportunities of achieving success; and to provide such opportunities, governments have been established and laws enacted. The purpose of law is to protect mankind from the lawless. Law was never written to make men better; it is written to restrain lawlessness. Anarchy, however, would have us do away with social organization, and return to the law of individual desire; which, in a nutshell, means a return to the habits of the jungle.

It is impossible for one to be absolutely free. There are certain elemental laws to which man will ever be subject, and from which he can in no wise escape. Gen. 3:16-19, Acts 17:31, Heb. 8:27, Rom. 6:23, etc. The combined intelligence of all humanity can not take away one jot nor tittle of these fundamental laws, which make up the constitution of the moral universe. Neither is the greatest happiness secured through unlimited freedom. *Robinson Crusoe* is the story of a man who sought to do just as he pleased; yet he found that in so doing he did not enjoy the greatest happiness. He longed for companionship, and was exceedingly glad when Friday happened along. There is within the nature of man a social instinct that demands satisfaction. God recognized this instinct in the very beginning, and made the home the basic institution of religion and government (Gen. 2:18).

The very soul of democracy is Christianity. "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is the foundation principle of all democratic government. This ideal can be implanted in human hearts by preaching and living Jesus

Christ. It has been said to the everlasting glory of our Lord that, while He was upon earth, "the common people heard him gladly." Christianity and democracy go hand in hand—one can not succeed permanently without the other.

We see the same tendency to get away from all authority manifested in Christianity as well as in politics. We see it in the futile attempts of the rationalists, the critics, and the free-thinkers, to destroy the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The "New Theology" tells us that the Bible is a work of human intelligence alone; that inspiration is purely psychological, the spontaneous outburst of human genius in its moments of loftiest flight; that Dante, Milton, Raphael, Copernicus, Newton, Washington and Lincoln were just as truly inspired as the men who wrote the Bible. God did not create man, but man created God. The Scripture presentation of God is not a revelation, but an evolution. The Bible is a relic of past ages; the Sermon on the Mount presents a code of ethics too antiquated for the notice of up-to-date people; and religion is but another name for superstition. Jesus was just a great Teacher, who spoke some grand, good things for the human family, but who was distinctly a man, and the son of Joseph. He was a son of God in the same sense that we are all children of God—not in any special divine sense. Thus it is that "modern scholarship" denies miracles, inspiration, the infallibility of the Scriptures, the incarnation and the atonement, the deity of Christ, and every fundamental of Christianity. Every doctrine dear to the heart of the Christian has been openly flouted by this holocaust of scholastic assumption which

would dethrone God and place man upon His seat of glory, and which would ultimately leave us a universe without a soul.

This is an age when *the authority of Christ* must be preached. Men must learn that they have no choice of opinions in matters wherein He has legislated (Matt. 28:18; Matt. 7:21-23; Eph. 1:22-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 22:14). Even the essentials of Christian unity are not matters of concession and compromise, but matters of revelation (Eph. 4:1-6). In preaching Christ to the eunuch, Philip must have told him what to do be to saved. One can not tell a sinner what to do to be saved, without telling him to be baptized—i. e., if he speaks where the Bible speaks—and it is in baptism that the sinner first publicly acknowledges the authority of Christ. How did the eunuch find out about baptism? See Acts 8:36-40. Philip must have told him what to do to be saved, which is a very necessary part of preaching Christ. Preaching Christ is equivalent to preaching the gospel, and preaching the gospel is equivalent to preaching the facts, commands and promises of the gospel (Acts 8:12). Conversion is the absolute surrender of self and substance to God. Let us, therefore, sing and preach:

> "All hail the power of Jesus' name,
> Let angels prostrate fall!
> Bring forth the royal diadem
> And crown Him Lord of all!"

Jesus is now the King of glory—let us make Him the King of the world! He came not as a Caesar. There were no captives at His chariot wheels; no applauding multitudes to march before Him in triumphal procession; no armies moving at His military command; no servile legislators to write odes in commemoration of His victo-

ries on the field of battle. He came not as the ruler of a petty Jewish principality, but as Conqueror of the unseen powers of darkness. He has all authority in heaven and on earth—His will is the absolute law from which there is no appeal. When men allow Him to have undisputed sway over their hearts, lawlessness, strife, war, vice and crime will vanish from the earth.

"Majestic sweetness sits enthroned,
Upon the Savior's brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned;
His lips with grace o'erflow."

2: *We need to preach Christ to-day because there is so much sorrow in the world.* The nations have emerged from the bloodiest war in all history. Devastated Belgium, bleeding France, chaotic Russia, and suffering England evince the passing of the grim war monster. The crosses of Flanders fields and the bleaching bones of the Carpathians are the mute memorials of his bloody march. Murder, rapine, pillage, cruelty and hatred have held carnage in a stricken world. The poet has written:

"There is a vale in the Flemish land,
Where the lengthening shadows spread,
When day, with crimson sandals shod,
Goes home athwart the mounds of sod,
That cry in silence up to God,
From the valley of the dead."

Who has not been thrilled by the stirring meter of "In Flanders' Fields," or wept silently over the pathetic lines of "The Spires of Oxford?"

"I saw the spires of Oxford
As I was passing by,
The gray spires of Oxford
Against a pearl-gray sky.

My heart was with the Oxford men
Who went abroad to die.

"The years go fast in Oxford,
The golden years and gay,
The hoary colleges look down
On careless boys at play.
But when the bugles sounded war.
They put their games away.

"They left the peaceful river,
The cricket-field, the quad,
The shaven lawns of Oxford
To seek a bloody sod—
They gave their merry youth away
For country and for God.

"God rest you, happy gentlemen,
Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun,
Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
Than even Oxford town."

War, famine, pestilence have stalked in quick and fearful succession. Sorrow and suffering abound in every land, and practically every home circle has been touched in some way by these grim realities of life.

Where can the world find consolation? In Christ Jesus. He alone can console the suffering heart, appease the distracted mind, and speak peace to the unpardoned soul. He trod the winepress alone; He knows our infirmities; He sympathizes with us in our afflictions. He, Himself, was a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Isa. 53:1-9; Heb. 2:14-16, 4:14-16; John 11:25, 35.

To whom shall we go for consolation in affliction, and for hope in the hour of death? Not to science—it has none to offer! Not to philosophy—it is sheer specula-

tion! Not to the "New Theology"—it is built on theory and thrives on doubt! Not to rationalism—it depends upon reason, and reason is helpless in such an hour! Not to human learning—it stands bewildered in the presence of the great mystery! The inherent superiority of Chrisitianity lies in the fact that it presents the One who conquered death, and who offers redemption of both spirit and body. Immortality is promised only to those who obey the gospel. It is the doctrine of physical redemption. No system of natural religion or philosophy offers such a doctrine of immortality as that taught in the Bible (John 11:23-26; Acts 2:29-32; Rom. 7:24-25, 8:37-39; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 John 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:35-39). See also Rom. 2:3-11 and 8:18. Christ is the only Person who has offered immortality and eternal life; and who demonstrated His ability to fulfil His promises by His own resurrection from Joseph's tomb (Matt. 28:1-8; Luke 24:36-40; John 20:26-29; Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:12-20).

3. *We need to preach Christ to-day because there is so much sin in the world.* James 1:14-15. Satan-lust-sin-death; a terrible pedigree indeed!

That sin is universal is undeniable. War is an evidence of sin. Disease, suffering, death—these are consequences of sin.

Sin is a criminal, a thief, a slanderer, and a slave-dealer. Sin is a seducer of the vilest type; he promises so much and gives so little!

There is one, and only one, cure for sin. Plenty of quack remedies are offered—but there is just one cure. We hear much about "social service," "new thought," "salvation by character," etc., etc. Some think that

proper control of capital, just distribution of wealth, education, socialism, etc., will usher in the Millenium. Along comes Mrs. Eddy with her so-called "Christian Science"—about the meanest concoction that was ever brewed in the bottomless pit—blatantly denying the fact of sin altogether, telling us that sin is mental error and nothing more! The Bible says, however, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23).

There is only one remedy for sin—the blood of Christ. (Heb. 9:22-28; Col. 1:14; 1 John 1:7). There is only one place to meet that blood—in the grave of water (John 19:34; Eph. 5:26). Hence, baptism is called "the washing of regeneration" (Tit. 3:5).

The *blood* of Christ is the *means*, and the *gospel* is the *power* of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16.) *Faith takes* away the *love* of sin. *Repentance* destroys the *practice* of sin. *Baptism* changes the *relationship* from the power of Satan unto that of God. *Pardon* removes the *guilt* of sin. *Resurrection* will remove us from the *presence* of sin. *Immortalization* will take away from us the *possibility* of sin.

When God forgives sin, He blots it out forever—He forgives and forgets (Psa. 103:11-14; Isa. 1:18).

There is sin everywhere. War has bred vice and crime in almost every country. There are two things that time will never change—human nature and the gospel of Christ. The gospel is the only power that will regenerate us, and make us partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). As long as sin is in the world, there is need of redemption, and need of preaching Christ.

Christ, then, is the story that never grows old. Tell it to the working man in the factory, to the business

man in his office, to the judge on the bench, to the teacher in the school-room, to the instructor in the college, to the farmer in the field, to the poor woman bent over the wash-tub. Every Christian should be a soul winner. This is his business. No matter how deep may be his learning, how broad his culture, how eloquent his speech, nor how polished his language, his greatest power should be in the winning of souls. Let us follow the example of the Jerusalem church and go everywhere preaching the Word. Let us preach Christ in every land and in every age,

> "Till the sun grows cold,
> And the stars are old
> And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold!"

The Restoration movement stands preeminently for the exaltation of Christ.

> "No mortal can with Him compare
> Among the sons of men;
> Fairer is He than all the fair
> That fill the heavenly train."

I plead with you to wear His name, and to take His book of discipline as your only guide in religious faith and worship; to obey His ordinances in order to please Him in everything He has commanded; to belong to His body on the terms which He has laid down; to emulate His perfect example and walk of faith, to the degree that you may be able, with His help, to crucify your fleshly nature. Press on toward the mark! Put on the whole armor of God! Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. By so doing, you shall gain an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

XVIII

THE GREAT DEMONSTRATION*

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:13-20.

Text: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."—Matt. 16:17.

Introduction: (1) *The text explained:* (a) The heart of Columbus must have leaped with joy when he looked for the first time at the shore line of the new world. Balboa's soul must have been filled with an indescribable emotion when, from a lofty peak in Panama, he first saw the Pacific Ocean. But great as these discoveries were, they were nothing as compared with the flood of eternal light which was flashed upon the consciousness of the apostle Peter regarding the identity of Jesus, and which found expression for the first time in the "good confession" which fell from his lips, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," v. 16. (b) Our text reveals the *source* of this inspiration. "*Flesh and blood* hath not revealed it unto thee," said Jesus, "but my Father who is in heaven" (hath revealed it unto thee). In other words, Peter's confession was not merely a flash of *human genius*, but it was a divine truth impressed upon his consciousness by a *direct*

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* The arguments presented in this outline have been taken from *The Messiahship, or Great Demonstration*, by Evangelist Walter Scott, one of the classic works of the Restoration movement.

revelation from the Father. At the risk of being dubbed "conservative," I shall state it as my opinion that the Holy Spirit actually suggested the *words* of the confession to the apostle's subconscious mind. (c) This confession, says M. M. Davis, was "the sun of all light, the chief of all truth, and contained within its rich bosom the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection." (*First Principles*, p. 136). It was a concise statement of the fundamental truth of Christianity and of the one article of faith essential to salvation.

(2) *The appeal to reason:* This sermon is intended to appeal to your reasoning faculties. It has been rightly said that one who *can not* reason is a fool, that one who *dares not* reason is a coward, and one who *will not* reason is a bigot. This is particularly true in the realm of religious thought. The principal reason why there is so much indifference in the church at the present time is the fact that men and women are controlled by *sentiment* in matters of religious faith and worship rather than by *logic*. They seem unwilling to give serious thought to the claims of Christ. The foundation of a true Christian life is *faith*, and faith implies *conviction*. Now conviction is not mere intellectual assent to a proposition; conviction is a thing that grips the soul, moulds character and determines destiny; and convictions are formed only by intelligent reasoning to definite conclusions. I am asking you, therefore, to lay aside sentiment and all personal feeling and theory, for the next hour, and to reason with me as regards the evidence which has been submitted to support the fundamental truth of Christianity as first stated by the apostle Peter.

(3) *The proposition stated:* (a) The first truth of all human knowledge and existence is that *God is*, Heb.

11:6. The fact of God may be stated and accepted as a "religious axiom." The Bible does not attempt to *prove* that there is a God, for the simple reason that such an elementary truth is beyond the realm of proof. On the contrary the Bible merely *assumes* His existence as a necessary and self-evident verity, Gen. 1:1. (b) There is only one book in all the world that claims to be the *accurate and inspired* revelation of God to man. That book is the Bible, 1 Thess. 3:13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:21. This being true, the Bible must carry within its own bosom the credentials to prove its divine origin; and these evidences must be *internal*, not external. The first great proof of the supernatural origin of the Bible is its *internal unity*, which is nothing short of marvelous in view of the fact that its various parts were written by more than forty different men who had no means of cummunication with one another, and who wrote at different intervals over a period of more than twenty centuries. (c) From Genesis to Revelation, the fundamental proposition of the Bible is the Messiahship of Jesus. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to Him, and everything in the New Testament points back to Him. The Bible is Christo-centric, and the thought that unfolds throughout its pages is that which was first announced in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3:15, viz., that the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head. (d) The first great truth for human consideration is God. Next to it in importance is the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Ye believe in God, believe *also* in me," said Jesus, John 14:1-6. Upon the acceptance or rejection of these two fundamental truths depends the eternal destiny of every human being, John 3:16-18. (e) When a scientist

wishes to establish his theory, he goes to nature and her works for the necessary proof; when a physician seeks to verify any theory concerning the structure or functions of the human body, he appeals to the physcial body for evidence. In like manner the Christian evangelist who seeks to impress upon his hearers the truth of the Messiahship of Jesus must turn to the Bible for his evidence. He can not expect to find this kind of evidence in science, philosophy, metaphysics nor any other branch of human knowledge. In the very nature of the case this must be a truth, not of *human knowledge*, but of *divine revelation;* and, as the Bible claims to be a divine revelation, and the only one for that matter, it follows that the Bible is the only book to which we can go for the evidence to support this fundamental truth. (f) In fact the entire Bible has been given to man for this very purpose, viz., to *demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.* This we can truthfully term *the great demonstration.* Practically every great character and important event of the Bible record is related in some way to this great demonstration. (g) This demonstration is the greatest ever made to mankind in its source, its nature, its scope and its effect upon the destiny of the human race.

(4) *The proposition amplified:* (a) In Christianity, there are just two things to consider—a Person and a System. The Person is Jesus of Nazareth. The System is His teaching. (b) The question arises at this point: What is the proper relation between the Person and the System? There is but one answer: *the System depends upon the Person.* It must be admitted that much confusion has been caused by reversing this order; too much emphasis has been placed upon the

System, in the past, to the exclusion of the Person. (c) Who is Jesus? Is He the Son of God? If so, the doctrine which He expounded has the *authority* of heaven behind it, Matt. 28:18. This is the argument of the Bible. The Bible does not concern itself with proving the System to be true; the Bible seeks only to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Once this is proved, everything that Jesus said and did is proved. Let it be proved that Jesus is the Son of God, and it follows that nothing He taught can possibly be false. (d) There are two things that enter into the discussion at this point: one is *power*, the other is *authority*. Power has to do with *matter*, authority with *mind*. By power, God *made* the world; by authority, He *governs* it. By power God has made man what he is; by authority, he would make man what he ought to be. Nature is a manifestation of God's power; true religion is the revelation of His authority. The former is a lesson to the *eye*, the latter to the *ear*. (e) Now the Sonship of Christ rests upon *evidence;* and the teaching of Christ rests upon *authority*. Christianity stands or falls with its great Expounder. In Christianity we have the Person and the Doctrine; only one of these propositions needs to be proved, viz., *the Person*. (f) Consider, at this point, Matt. 3:17, John 3:16, John 20:30-31. Here are three important Scriptures, and they all pertain to a Person, who is said to be the Son of God. Throughout the entire Bible, there is anticipation of Him, belief in Him, and obedience to Him. Nothing is said of theology or dogma; everything centers in a Person, the most compelling Figure of human history. "And here we come to the conclusion of the whole matter, and the conclusion is the whole matter: Christianity is the

greatest fact of history, because Christianity is Jesus Christ. When we turn to Him, how futile are all words, for He is love; He is man; He is God." (*What Men Need Most*, Poling, p. 45).

(5) *The method to be used:* (a) The question that arises here is: What method shall be used in demonstrating the Messiahship of Jesus? (b) The *usual method* has been to appeal to the works which Jesus, Himself, did, and to the words which He spoke and the principles which He taught. (c) This, however, is not the *Bible method.* Jesus Himself said that His words and His works were not His own, but the words and works of the Father, John 6:38, 7:16, 14:10-11, 17:4, etc. The Bible presents the *Father* as the One who made the great demonstration. *It proposes to prove the Messiahship of the Son by recording all that the Father has said and done to prove to the world that Jesus is the Christ and His only begotten Son.* Let us follow the Bible method and trace the events and the steps in the unfolding of this divine demonstration.

Argument: The evidence which the Father has submitted to demonstrate the Messiahship of Jesus may be classified, in order, as follows:

1. *In the mysterious oracle of Gen. 3:15.* Note (1) that these words were spoken *by the Father* before our first parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden. (2) That it contains the first intimation of His eternal purpose, Eph. 1:3-10, 3:1-12. (3) That it contains a direct allusion to the incarnation. The Messiah is to be the Seed of a woman, and Jesus of Nazareth is the only Person who ever came before the world claiming to be the seed of a woman *exclusively*, Luke 1:35, John 1:14, Gal. 4:4. (4) That it is a clear-cut prediction of the age-

long struggle between Christ and the devil in which the latter, though at times partially and temporarily victorious, is ultimately to be vanquished with all his evil works, 1 Cor. 15:25-26. Eternal segregation in hell will be the ultimate end of Satan and his rebel hosts, Matt. 25:41, Rev. 20:10.

2. *In the various promises made by the Father to holy men of olden times.* Note (1) the promise made to Abraham, Gen. 22:18. Paul says that this promise is a direct allusion to Christ, Gal. 3:16. (2) The promise repeated to Isaac, Gen. 26:4. (3) The same promise repeated to Jacob, Gen. 28:14. (4) The promise made to David, 2 Sam. 7:16, Jer. 23:5-6, Psa. 89:3-4, Acts 13:23, 26:6. See also Rom. 4:14-16, Acts 2:39, etc.

3. *In the types and metaphors of the Old Testament.* The question is often asked: Why did not the Father send His Son immediately after man's fall? Why did He wait four thousand years or more before He sent His only begotten Son into the world to provide an atonement for man's sins? To which we reply: If Jesus had come in the time of Adam or Abraham or Moses or Elijah, would the world have been prepared to receive Him as the Messiah? What evidence would there have been to have proved His Messiahship? The Scriptures state expressly that God sent forth His Son "in the fulness of time," Gal. 4:4. No doubt this delay was necessary in order to give the Father sufficient time to build up a structure of evidence in the form of types, metaphors and prophecies that would prove the Messiahship of Jesus beyond all doubt. In other words, the Father spent four thousand years and more, directing the course of human events and particularly the history of His chosen people, for the purpose of laying a

groundwork of evidence that would establish beyond all reasonable doubt the Messiahship of His Son. See 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 8:5, 10:1; Col. 2:17. Among the types and metaphors of Christ in the Old Testament are: (1) Sacrifices of blood, Heb. 10:1-10, John 1:29, Rev. 5:6; (2) Jacob's Ladder, Gen. 28:12, John 1:51; (3) the Smitten Rock, Exo. 17:5-6, 1 Cor. 10:4; (4) the Two Goats, Lev. 16:7-8; (5) the Heavenly Manna, Exo. 16, John 6:49-50; (6) the Brazen Serpent, Num. 21:9, John 3:14; (7) the Paschal Lamb, Exo. 12, 1 Cor. 5:7; (8) the Ark of the Covenant, Exo. 25:10, Heb. 9:4; (9) the Mercy Seat, Exo. 25:17-20, Heb. 9:5; (10) the Cities of Refuge, Num. 35:6, Heb. 6:18. Among the great characters of the Old Testament who are said to be typical, in certain respects, of Jesus are (1) Adam, Rom. 5:14; (2) Melchizedek, Heb. 11:7,17; (3) Isaac, Gen. 22, Heb. 11:17-19; (4) Joseph, Acts 7:9; (5) Moses, Deut, 18:15, Acts 3:22-23; (5) the High Priest of Israel, Heb. 9:11-28; (6) David, Jer. 30:9, Acts 2:30, 13:23, 34, 38; (7) Solomon, Matt. 12:42; (8) Jonah, Matt. 12:39-40, etc. "The design of all types is two-fold: 1. To give a pictorial and outline representation of something in the future, and especially of the Scheme of Redemption. 2. In order that the type might serve as a proof and demonstration of the divine origin of the antitype. This is evident from Heb. 3:5." (Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, p. 71).

4. *In the prophecies of the Old Testament*, which point out

(1) *The time of the Messiah's coming.* (a) Isa. 2:2. It was to be in "the latter days," or last dispensation. (b) Joel 2:28-32, quoted by Peter in Acts 2:16-21. (c) Dan. 2:44. He was to come during the fourth universal

monarchy, or Roman Empire. See Luke 2:1. (d) Gen. 49:10. He was to come before Judah ceased to be a distinct and ruling tribe. It is a well-known fact that Judah was the only tribe remaining intact in the time of Christ, and until the final destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. (e) Dan. 9:25. Here the exact time of His advent is foretold. "According to Bible usage a day represents a year. The decree referred to was made 457 B. C. Beginning at this date, the 483 years will bring us down to 26 A. D., the exact time (allowing for the mistake of four years made by Dionysius Exiguous) when the Savior began his public life." (Everest, *The Divine Demonstration*, p. 320).

(2) *The place and circumstances of His nativity.* (a) Mic. 5:2 He was to be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, and not in Bethlehem of Galilee. Matt. 2:4-6. (b) He was to be born of a virgin, Isa. 7:14, Matt. 1:23. (c) Mic. 5:2, Psa. 2:7, Zech. 13:7, John 1:1-2, Phil. 2:6, 1 Tim. 3:16. These Scriptures clearly indicate His deity.

(3) *The qualities of His character.* (a) His wisdom, Isa. 11:1-4. (b) His obedience, Deut. 18:18. See also Matt. 3:15, John 6:48, 12:49, 15:15, etc. (c) His love of righteousness, Psa. 45:6-7, Heb. 1:8-9. (d) His gentleness and tenderness, Isa. 42:1-4. (e) His compassion, Isa. 61:1-3, Luke 4:18-21. (f) His piety, Psa. 40:7-8.

(4) *The principal events of His life.* (a) A divinely-appointed messenger was to herald His coming, Mal. 3:1, Isa. 40:3-5, Matt. 3:3. (b) He was to be anointed, or consecrated, for His three-fold office of prophet, priest and king, Isa. 61:1-3, Matt. 3:16, Luke 4:18-21. (c) He was to work miracles of mercy, Isa. 35:5-6. (d) He was to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"

Isa. 53:3, John 11:35, Luke 22:44. (e) He was to enter Jerusalem in triumph, Zech. 9:9. Matt. 21:1-11. (f) He was to be rejected by His own people, Isa. 53:1-3, Matt. 27:22-23, John 1:11.

(5) *The circumstances of His death and burial.* (a) He was to be betrayed by a companion, Psa. 41:9, John 13:18. (b) The price of His betrayal is even forenamed, Zech. 11:12, Matt. 26:15. (c) His demeanor when on trial is prophetically described, Isa. 53:7, Matt. 26:62-64. (d) He was to suffer great abuse, Isa. 50:6, Zech. 12:10, Matt. 26:67-68, 27:30-31. (e) He was to die with transgressors, Isa. 53:12, Luke 23:33. (f) Not a bone of His body was to be broken, Psa. 34:20, John 19:33. (g) His garments were to be parted, Psa. 22:18, Luke 23:34. (h) He was to make His grave with the wicked and with the rich, Isa. 53:9, Matt. 27:57-60. He was crucified between criminals and buried in a rich man's tomb.

(6) *His resurrection, ascension* and *coronation.* (a) The Messiah was to rise from the dead, Isa. 53:10, 11; Psa. 16:10; Matt. 20:18-19; Acts 2:29-32. (b) He was to ascend to the Father, Psa. 68:18, Acts 1:9-11. (c) He was to be crowned Lord of lords and King of kings, Psa. 24:7-10. Here the approach of the Messiah to the heavenly city is graphically and beautifully described. His coronation is also pictured in Dan. 7:13-14. See Phil. 2:9-11.

(7) *The nature and universal scope of His kingdom.* (a) The meaning of His death and its relation to the kingdom is a matter of prophecy, Isa. 53:5-6, 12; Matt. 26:26-29. (b) The nature of His priesthood is clearly pointed out; He was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, i. e., both *king* and *priest* combined, Psa.

110:4, Heb. 7. (c) His offices are also clearly foretold. He was to be King, Psa. 2:6, 110:3. He was to be Priest, Psa. 110:4. He was to be a Prophet, Deut. 18:18. See also Matt. 28:18 and Acts 3:22. (d) The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached first, as an accomplished fact, in Jerusalem, Isa. 2:2-3, Luke 24:45-49, Acts 2. (e) The kingdom was to be inaugurated on earth by Holy Spirit baptism, Joel 2:28, Acts 2:1-4. (f) The kingdom of Christ was to be one of peace and glory, Isa. 9:6, 11:5-6, John 18:36. (g) Its influence was to be of such a nature as, in a large measure, to secure the mitigation of war, Isa. 2:4. (h) His kingdom was to mark the destruction of idolatry, Isa. 2:17. Hab. 2:14. (i) It was also to include the Gentiles, Isa. 48:6, 60:3-5, Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 11:18. (j) It was to have a small beginning followed by a wonderful expansion, Dan. 2:35, Matt. 13:31-32. (k) It is to become universal in its scope, Psa. 72:8. (l) It is to be the final dispensation in the scheme of redemption, Dan. 2:44, Matt. 16:18. It should be emphasized that all this wonderful harmony between type and antitype, between prophecy and fulfilment, was the *evidential work of the Father* for the purpose of demonstrating the Messiahship of Jesus.

5. *In the Old Testament passages which describe the lineage of Jesus.*

(1) He was to be a direct descendant of *Abraham*, Gen. 12:3, Gal. 3:14, Heb. 2:16.

(2) He was to be of the tribe of *Judah*, Gen. 49:10, Heb. 7:14.

(3) He was to be of the royal house of *David*, Isa. 11:1, 2, 10; Acts 13:23.

(4) He was to derive His human nature from *woman*, Gen. 3:15, Jer. 31:22, Gal. 4:4.

(5) He was to be the Son of *God*, Psa. 2:6-8, 110:1-2, Luke 1:35, Matt. 3:17.

6. *In His incarnation.* In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, Gal. 4:4. The greatest fact of the Old Testament is that God made man in His own image, Gen. 1:27; the greatest fact of the New Testament is that God became the image of sinful man, Gal. 4:5, Heb. 2:14-15, John 1:14, Matt. 1:23. The incarnation and virgin birth are essential truths of Christianity. In the miracle of the incarnation, the Father *manifested* His Son to the world in human flesh. The begetting of Jesus in the womb of Mary was a *work of the Father* by and through the agency of the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:35.

7. *In the circumstances connected with His baptism*, Matt. 3:13-17. Following the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the voice of the Father broke the stillness of the centuries for the first time since Sinai, to publicly *introduce* Jesus of Nazareth to the world as His only begotten Son. Not only was He publicly and verbally introduced to the world as the Son of God, but He was also anointed to His three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King, at the same time, by the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove upon Him, Luke 4:18-21.

8. *In His many wonderful miracles.* While Jesus was the active agent in performing these miracles of mercy and power, yet in reality it was the Father who was performing them by and through Him, and who was thus demonstrating to the world that this was His only begotten Son, John 8:42, 6:38, 7:16, 14:10-11, 17:4, and Acts 2:22.

9. *In His transfiguration*, Matt. 17:1-7. Here, in the presence of Moses representing the school of the law,

and of Elijah representing the school of the prophets; and of Peter, James and John representing the school of the apostles, Jesus was transfigured, i. e., caused to assume the heavenly glory and immortality which He possesses to-day at God's right hand. The same declaration that had been made by the Father following His baptism was repeated *verbatim* on this occasion, with the added injunction, "Hear ye him." How this inspiring scene must have lingered as a precious memory in the minds of the apostles! 2 Pet. 1:17-18.

10. *In His crucifixion and resurrection.* (a) Time passes; only a few days are left. The storm gathers and begins to roll and rumble in the distance. His enemies are bitter against Him. The Father permits them to do with Him as they will. A companion betrays Him for thirty pieces of silver; a disciple denies Him with bitter curses. The chief priests condemn Him to death. Pontius Pilate, unable to stem the tide, gives Him into the hands of the mob, and on a lonely hill back of Jerusalem He is nailed to a cross. Where is the Father now? What is He doing to prevent this tragedy? Alas! He can do nothing! He turns His back upon Him, and His face away from Him. The time has come when eternal justice demands that this Sufferer, the Son of God, shall tread the wine-press alone! It is the only way! (b) He dies on the cross. His body is laid away tenderly in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. His enemies roll a stone in front of the tomb; they seal it with a Roman seal; and a military guard, consisting of fifteen Roman soldiers, keeps constant guard for three days and nights, lest His disciples should break into the tomb and steal the body and then proclaim a fraudulent resurrection. But—what will the Father do for Him

now? Will He permit His Holy One to see corruption? Not if His word is sure and steadfast! (c) *The time is now at hand for the crowning miracle of the great demonstration. God the Father proves this Jesus to be His Son by raising Him from the dead*, Rom. 1:4. Having been "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," He was raised from the dead by the same determinate counsel and foreknowledge, Acts 2:23-24. It was impossible that death should hold Him in the grave *because He was the Son of God.* (d) The fundamental *truth* of Christianity is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and this truth rests upon the fundamental *fact* of Christianity which is that God raised Him from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:12-20.

11. *In the events following His resurrection.* The Father does not even bring this demonstration to an end when He raises His Son from the dead. (a) He receives Him back into the same glory and sweet communion which they had enjoyed from before the foundation of the world, Acts 1:8-11, John 17:5. (b) He invests Him with the scepter of the kingdom; crowns Him King of kings and Lord of lords; and gives Him a seat at His own right hand, Rom. 8:34, Eph. 1:20, Col. 3:1. He clothes Him with all authority in heaven and upon earth, Matt. 28:18. There He is to-day, with the keys of death and of hades in His possession, Rev. 1:17-18, ruling the affairs of His kingdom; and there He shall be until the last enemy shall be abolished, which is death, 1 Cor. 15:25-26, Phil. 2:9-11. (c) But this is not even the end! Down in Jerusalem, the apostles are in an upper chamber, waiting! On the first Pentecost following the resurrection, while the twelve are gathered in one place, the Holy Spirit descends upon

them and overwhelms them with divine power, Acts 2:1-4. Under the spell of His presence, they proclaim the facts of the gospel for the first time in the history of the world; many thousands hear, believe and obey; the church is established; the kingdom is inaugurated upon earth; and Christianity is started on its career of world-wide conquest. *Bear in mind that this was all the work of the Father*, Acts 2:32. It was the Father who conducted the coronation ceremonies in heaven; it was the Father who dispatched the Holy Spirit to the apostles, according to promise, John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:15; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; and it was the Father who continued with the apostles throughout their earthly labors, "bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will," Heb. 2:4. (d) With the death of the apostles, and the writing of the New Testament, the supernatural part of the great demonstration came to an end, 2 Pet. 1:3. The work of Christ upon earth was then committed to the church, with her evangelists, bishops and deacons, Eph. 4:1-16, 1 Tim. 3:14-15, 1 Cor. 1:21, Rom. 1:16.

Conclusion: (1) Thus it will be seen that Peter's confession of the deity of Jesus was but an incident of the great demonstration, of which the Bible is the inspired and authoritative record. That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the fundamental truth of the entire remedial system. In the light of this study, the words of our text, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven," become self-explanatory.

(2) The Messiahship of Jesus has been confirmed by three divine affirmations: (a) The *first* was sworn by

the Almighty to King David, and was to the effect that the Messiah should be his son according to the flesh, Psa. 132:11, Acts 2:30. (b) The *second* was affirmed by Jesus in the presence of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and again later in the presence of Pontius Pilate, to the effect that He was the Son of God and "King of the Jews," Luke 22:70, 23:3, 1 Tim. 6:13. (c) The *third* was sworn by the Father to the Son, that the latter should be a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, Psalm 110:4, Heb. 7:17.

(3) The Messiahship of Jesus is a truth which has been sealed by the blood of Jesus and by the blood of countless martyrs, Rev. 7:14. The apostles died for it, and the faithful in all ages have suffered for it. The church has proclaimed it as the fundamental truth of Christian doctrine for almost twenty centuries. One of the supreme questions for human consideration has always been and always will be, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?"

(4) The Father has piled the evidence so high to prove the deity of Jesus that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in accepting and believing it. This demonstration was concluded in the works and testimony of the apostles who were guided into all truth by the Spirit of God. If you reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit, you are without hope in this world and in the world to come.

XIX

THE GOSPEL PLAN OF SALVATION*

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:3-14.

Text: ".....in whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation....." —Eph. 1:13.

Introduction: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul, "who hath blessed *us* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as he chose *us* in him before the foundation of the world....."—Eph. 1:3-4, ff. Note the frequent use of the pronoun, "*us*," in the first twelve verses of this chapter: "who hath blessed *us*," v. 3; "as he chose *us* in him," v. 4; "having foreordained *us* unto adoption as sons," v. 5; "which he freely bestowed on *us*," v. 6; "which he made to abound toward *us*," v. 8; "making known unto *us* the mystery of his will," etc., v. 9. In v. 13, however, the writer changes from the *first* person to the *second:* "in whom *ye* also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." We conclude, therefore, that in the first twelve verses he refers to the *apostles*. The idea is that, previous to the creation of the world, the Almighty, foreknowing man's

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fall, had prepared a remedy; that He had also foreordained the office and work of the apostles, as a part of this divine plan; that it was also foreordained that this divine plan, which is called "the mystery of his will," and which was hidden in the mind of God for many centuries, should later be made known in all its details to the apostles, and that they in turn should reveal it to all mankind. In v. 13, the apostle addresses himself directly to the *brethren of the church at Ephesus*. "In whom ye also, having heard the word of truth," he says, "the gospel of your salvation—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Now the Ephesian brethren had heard this gospel, accepted it, obeyed it, and had been adopted into the family of God and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. 4:30, 2 Cor. 1:22.

Note that this divine mystery, this eternal purpose of God, is termed, by the apostle, "the gospel of your salvation," i. e., the *glad tidings* of your salvation. It is elsewhere referred to as "the *word of reconciliation*," 2 Cor. 5:19. The gospel plan of salvation, the word of reconciliation and the scheme of redemption are all synonymous terms, and refer to the same "mystery, which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit," Eph. 3:5. Concerning this salvation "the prophets," says Peter, "sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you," 1 Pet. 1:11; to which he adds, "To whom it was revealed that, not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through

them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into," v. 12.

The importance of this gospel plan of salvation is evident from the following matters of fact: (a) the Father conceived it—it was born in the pre-temporal councils of heaven; (b) its details were fully foretold by the prophets of olden times; (c) it was finally and fully revealed by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, John 16:13, Acts 2:1-4; (d) it was of such universal import that even the angels sought to look into it. Our investigation will prove further that it was conceived and executed solely for man's benefit; that it was the gracious outpouring and sublime manifestation of God's love for humanity. We shall attempt to analyze this gospel plan of salvation under the following captions:

1. *The source and origin of the plan.*

(1) *It was not* the product of *human genius*, nor was it merely an evolution of man's religious instincts. The wisdom of this world is but foolishness with God, 1 Cor. 3:19.

(2) It *antedates* man in the *time* of its origin. It was planned "before the foundation of the world," Matt. 13:35, 25:34; Luke 11:50; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:4. In other words, the plan was worked out in all of its details long before the universe and man were created.

(3) It *originated* in the *councils of heaven.* The *creation* of man was a matter of extraordinary importance in the sight of God, as indicated by Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image." Note the pronouns "*us*" and "*our.*" The idea presented here is that man's

creation was of sufficient importance to necessitate the holding of a divine *concilium*, attended by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, at which it was agreed that man should be created "in the image of God." Now if man's *creation* was a matter of extraordinary importance, the matter of his *redemption* was of infinitely greater import. No doubt God foreknew that man would fall, and for this reason the *remedy* was planned before man was even created. The remedy is the blood of Christ, Eph. 1:7, Luke 11:50, 1 John 1:7.

2. *The objective of the plan*, which was three-fold:

(1) *To reconcile Jew and Gentile*, Eph.2:13-18. The eternal purpose of God was to send Jesus Christ in the fullness of time, to publish the gospel, to establish the church, and to unite Jews and Gentiles in the one body of Christ, Eph. 3:6.

(2) *To reconcile man to God*, 2 Cor. 5:18-21, Eph. 3:18. Man had become alienated from God by his own wicked works, Col. 1:21. The moment man sinned rebellion entered his heart and he became separated from God. Had this rebellion ended with the first sin, all would have been well; but the sad truth is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Rom. 3:23. God knew quite well that this rebellion could never be overcome by *punishment*, that punishment would have driven the erring creature farther and farther away from the throne of divine grace. There was, in fact, only one way by which this rebellion could be overcome, and reconciliation brought about, and that was by means of a sublime demonstration of God's love. Hence the gospel plan of salvation with its doctrine of atonement and reconciliation wrought by the suffering and death

of Jesus on the Cross, Rom. 5:11, 3:25; 1 John 2:2. The first fact of the gospel message is that *Christ died for our sins*, 1 Cor. 15:3.

(3) *To reconcile the angels to God*, and to thus bring to nought Satan's pre-mundane rebellion. The effect of the plan was to be felt, not only upon earth, but in heaven as well: "that unto the *principalities and powers in the heavenly places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. 3:10. It seems that Satan, in his mad desire to usurp the authority of Jehovah, had spread charges of tyranny and injustice among the angels, some of whom were thus influenced to leave their first estate, Isa. 14:13-15; Ezek. 28:13-17, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6. There was only one way by which these charges could be consistently refuted, and that was by a demonstration of God's love.

Now the grace and love of God could be demonstrated only in a world of lost sinners; hence it became prudent to create man, to allow him to fall, and to provide the remedy for his salvation. The gospel plan of salvation was made and executed to accomplish these ends.

3. *The unfolding of the plan.*

(1) The question is often asked: Why did God wait so long before He sent His Son into the world to execute the gospel plan of salvation? Why didn't Jesus come and do His work immediately after man's fall, or in the time of Abraham, or of Moses, etc.? Now it is quite easy to ask questions, but not so easy to answer them.

> Evangelist W. H. Book relates a personal experience which occurred in a meeting which he was holding in Hagerstown, Md. There was a man in the community who posed as a "preacher-killer." This man dropped a question into the query-box one evening, and the question went something like this:

"If, as you say, the devil is responsible for sin, and sin is the cause of all misery and death, and if your God is all-powerful as you represent Him to be, why doesn't your God kill the devil and put an end to all the sin and misery in the world?" Bro. Book read the question publicly and replied: "My brother, God doesn't *want* to kill the devil, because if He were to do that, there would be too many orphans left in Hagerstown."

Why didn't God make the acorn so that it would grow into an oak instantaneously? Why didn't He make the seed so that it grow into a stalk all in a minute? Why doesn't He make the new-born babe so that it will grow into a man or woman all in a minute? When you answer these questions I will tell you why it was that God waited four thousand years before He sent His Son to make atonement for man's sins. Paul says that "when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his son," Gal. 4:4. I imagine that the Almighty had to wait until this old world had become so thoroughly sick and tired of sin and idolatry that it could appreciate Jesus; and even then, when He did come, His own people rejected and crucified Him, John 1:11, Matt. 27:25. In the Patriarchal dispensation God tried man under *conscience*, and conscience failed to subdue his passions; in the Jewish dispensation, God tried him under *law* and law failed likewise; in the present dispensation God has placed man under *grace*. Love is the last remedy which God has at His disposal, John 3:16. See also Rom. 2:15, Gal. 3:19, Rom. 5:20-21, John 1:17.

(2) This principle of *progressive revelation* is explained by Jesus under the analogy of the growth of a seed of corn, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear," Mark 4:28. (Note that this is not evolution. Evolution, says Le Conte, is "continuous,

progressive change, according to certain laws, and by means of *resident* forces." A progressive revelation from God can not, in any sense, be termed "a continuous, progressive change by means of *resident* forces;" on the contrary, it is a progressive development brought about by the revelation of an authority, and by the application of a power, outside of and higher than man).

(3) The stages in the progressive revelation of the gospel plan of salvation may be summarized as follows:

(a) From Adam to Abraham, we have the gospel in *promise*, Gen. 3:15. Here we have the first intimation of the remedial scheme in the mysterious oracle, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." See Gal. 4:4. Following the analogy laid down by Jesus, we may liken the gospel message, during this period, to the *seed*.

(b) From Abraham to Isaiah, we have the gospel in *promise*, Gen. 22:18, 26:4, 28:14, Jer. 23:5-6, Gal. 3:16, 3:8. We may liken the gospel message, during this period, unto the *blade*.

(c) From Isaiah to Malachi, we have the gospel in *prophecy*. Practically all the important incidents and characteristics of the life and work of Jesus are pointed out by the Old Testament prophets, 1 Pet. 1:10-11. We may liken this period unto the *stalk*.

(d) During the personal ministry of Jesus in the flesh, we have the gospel in *preparation*. During this period Jesus lived and worked under the law of Moses which He obeyed implicitly, Matt. 4:17; and during this period, the gospel of the kingdom was preached only in preparation, Mark 1:1, Matt. 4:23, Luke 9:6, Matt. 16:20, 17:10, etc. The message of John the Baptizer, and of Jesus and the apostles, during this time was:

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 3:2, 10:7. We may liken the gospel message, during this period, unto the *ear*.

(e) After the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, the gospel was proclaimed *in fact*. The first proclamation occurred in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30; there and then the facts of the gospel were announced as *facts* for the first time, Acts 2. This we may liken unto the *full grain in the ear*. This was the completed product of centuries of development, the beginning of the spiritual harvest.

Illustrations: (1) "To illustrate what is here meant, suppose some man in your community conceives the idea of building a great factory, and, after maturing it for a time purposes to do it. There is now a factory in *purpose*, but not in fact, neither running nor doing work. Nor does any man know anything of it except the man who has it in his purpose, nor has it existence anywhere except in his *purpose*. It is all a secret. After a time, in conversation with some of the prominent men in the community, he embodies his purpose in a *promise* to build a factory. There is yet no factory in existence except in purpose and promise. The promise being known in the community, excites some interest and sets inquiry in motion. He now advances another step and makes sundry *predictions* in reference to the factory, touching the time when it will be completed, the amount of work it will do, the advantage it will be to the community, etc. The factory still has no existence only in purpose, promise and prophecy. The next thing you hear is that the ground has been broken, the foundation laid, the materials brought together, machinery purchased, etc. It is now a factory in a *preparatory* or incipient state, but not complete nor doing any work. But finally it is finished and set in motion; the looms clatter; the spindles hum; it is now complete and doing work. It was a factory, first in purpose, then in promise, then in prophecy, then in a preparatory or incipient state, then in fact, in actual existence complete in

all its parts, doing work. So the gospel and the kingdom of God first existed only in the purpose of God, then in the promise of Abraham, then in the prophecies of the Old Testament, then in the preparatory or incipient state, and finally in a state of completeness and perfection on Pentecost."

—Franklin, *Gospel Preacher*, Vol. I., pp. 237-238.

(2) Consider also Isa. 28:16. In explanation of this prophecy we are told that the Stone was Christ, Psa. 118: 24; Matt. 21:42, Acts 4:11, Rom. 9:33, 1 Pet. 2:6. The Stone was to be uncovered in Zion, i. e., *Jerusalem*, Isa. 2 2-4. Adam dug for this Stone, but failed to find it; Abraham dug deeper, with no more success; Moses and the prophets dug still deeper, and came nearer to it. After the time of Elijah men seemed to forget about this Stone and the digging ceased for almost five hundred years. Then came John the Baptizer who picked up the working tools that Elijah had laid down, and who dug deeper than all of his predecessors and came nearer to the Stone than any of them, Luke 1:17, Matt. 17:10-13, John 1:29. Note that this Stone was to be uncovered *in* Jersualem, whereas John's work was all done *in the vicinity of* Jersualem. So, just three years later, twelve men took up John's work; they began their excavations in Jersualem and they kept on digging until, on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30, they found and uncovered the Stone, Acts 2:32-33.

4. *The three Persons involved in making and executing the plan.*

(1) It is evident from the first chapter of Genesis that *three Persons took part in the creation of the world:*

(a) The Father *originated* the plan of creation, Gen. 1:1. The Father was the *originating* Cause.

(b) The Son, or Logos, *executed* it. The statement, "And God *said*," is found nine consecutive times in the first chapter of Genesis. See also Psa. 33:6-9, 148:5-6; John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2. The Son was the *mediating* Cause.

(c) The Spirit *revealed* it, Gen. 1:2. The Spirit of God "moved" (i. e., *vitalized*, or, *made life*) "upon the face of the waters." "Waters," in this connection, implies the idea of a vast cosmic mass that was at this time "formless and empty." "The beautiful word, '*brooding*'—an exact rendering of the Hebrew—is most suggestive; since it vividly describes the cherishing of incipient life, as a preparation for its outburst." (Rotherham, *Emphasized Old Testament*, p. 3). "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the *breath* [spirit] of his mouth," Psa. 33:6. The Spirit was the *realizing* Cause.

(2) *The same three Persons have performed similar parts in the redemption of man.*

(a) The Father *made* the plan of salvation, Eph. 1:3-5, 3:9-11, 2:4-7.

(b) The Son *executed* it, John 6:38, 7:29, 17:4.

(c) The Spirit *revealed* it, 2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Pet. 1:11, John 16:13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

5. *The two sides of the plan:*

(1) *It has a divine side*, which includes:

(a) The Father's *grace*, as manifested in His providing the plan, Tit. 3:7; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7, 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:10. The Father was under no obligation to man to provide a plan of redemption for him, but He did so purely out of His love for him, John 3:16. "The grace of God hath appeared to all men, bringing salvation," Tit. 2:11, (marginal rendering); in other words, through God's grace, salvation has been brought within reach of all men; man, however, must accept and appropriate this salvation on the terms laid down in the New Testament.

(b) The *atonement* provided by the death of Jesus, Rom. 5:11, 3:25; 1 John 2:2, 4:10. *Atonement* means *at-one-ment*, or reconciliation. The Son was under no obligation to provide this atonement, but He was willing to do so because of His great love for man, John 15:13.

(c) The *revelation* of the plan, given to mankind through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is this inspired and authoritative revelation, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

(2) *It also has a human side.*

(a) The promises of God have always been *conditional*, with the possible exception of the covenant with Noah which was unconditional, Gen. 9:11. In like manner the promises of God under the new covenant are conditional.

(b) God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, but man must accept and appropriate the Gift in order to enjoy salvation, Acts 4:12. You might offer a friend a gift of one thousand dollars, but the gift will be of no value to him until he accepts it and uses it.

(c) God does not provide salvation in some mysterious and unintelligible manner; on the contrary, He lays down specific terms on compliance with which He promises to save the alien sinner, and the latter must accept and obey these terms. Hence the divine injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. 2:12.

(d) God has endowed every responsible creature with the capacity to think, reason, understand, believe and will; and He expects every intelligent person to exercise these faculties in an intelligent and creditable manner. Man does not possess a certain set of faculties for secular

matters and a totally different set of faculties for religious matters. He is expected to use the same faculties in weighing every problem that comes before him for investigation regardless of the nature of the problem. Conversion is turning to God, and, in order to be genuine, it must be in harmony with the laws laid down in the New Testament. No one can disregard any one of these laws and claim to be intelligently and Scripturally converted.

(e) Man's part, therefore, in this gospel plan of salvation consists in accepting and appropriating the free gift of God. This man does by: (1) *Faith in Christ*, John 14:1, 20:30-31; Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10, 6:1; Gal. 3:11; Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:6. Faith is the motivating principle of every Christian life. The true Christian walks by faith, lives by faith, and dies in faith. (2) *Obedience to Christ*, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 22:16; John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-4, 5:2-3, etc. There will be just two classes in the day of judgment: those who have *heard and done*, and those who have *heard but not done*, Matt. 7:24-27.

(f) When the alien sinner complies with the terms, God issues the *pardon*. Pardon is not something done in the heart of the sinner; it is something done *in heaven* for the sinner. A pardon is never issued, in civil life, at the place of imprisonment; it must be issued at the *seat of government*. So when the sinner is pardoned, the pardon does not take place *within the sinner*, but at the *seat of divine government*.

6. *The contents of the plan.* The gospel plan of salvation has

(1) *Three facts:* The (a) *death*, (b) *burial*, and (c) *resurrection* of Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-4. It has one *supreme*

truth, viz., that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. 16:16, John 20:31.

(2) *Three commands:* (a) *Believe*, Acts 16:31; (b) *repent*, Acts 2.38; (c) *be baptized*, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, Acts 22:16, etc. It has one *supreme command*, "Hear ye Him," Matt. 17:5.

(3) *Three promises:* (a) *Remission of sins*, Acts 2:38; (b) the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, Acts 2:38, 1 Cor. 6:19; (c) *eternal life*, John 3:16, Rom. 6:23. It has one *supreme reward*, the eternal redemption of both body and spirit, Rom. 8:23, 2.7; Heb. 9:12; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; Phil. 3:21, etc.

7. *The monuments of the plan*, which are three in number

(1) *Baptism*, which is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, Rom. 6:3-5, Col. 2:12.

(2) *The Lord's Day*, or first day of the week, Mark 16:9, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10. Apostolic precedent, in the matter of keeping the first day of the week, must be accepted as the authority of Christ, John 16:13, 20:22-23; 1 Cor. 14:37. The Lord's Day is a weekly memorial of the resurrection of Christ, Psa. 118:22-24, Mark 16:9.

(3) *The Lord's Supper*, which is a memorial of the death of Christ, 1 Cor. 11:26. (It should be noted, in this connection, that all three of the Christian ordinances memorialize one or more of the facts of the gospel).

Conclusion: (1) Modern "prophets of the dawn," upstart preachers and ultra-educated professors are telling us, in these days of "advanced thinking," that we are in need of a *new gospel*. As a matter of fact, there is one and only one gospel, and will never be any other—the same *old gospel* which has blessed the world

for almost twenty centuries. This gospel will never change because it is adapted to the needs of human nature and because human nature is the same in all ages. Rom. 1:16.

(2) Seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah prophesied that "the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills," Isa. 2:2. A "mountain," in prophetic symbolism, is a kingdom. The real meaning of this prophecy is, therefore, that the kingdom of Jehovah should be established "on the top of," or above, all other kingdoms. This is in harmony with Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. 2:44. Now when an institution is established *on the top of* the mountain, it is at the highest point. Holy men of old climbed only a short way up the mountain in the Patriarchal dispensation; Moses and the prophets climbed up higher during the Jewish dispensation; but it was left to the apostles to scale the mountain and to establish on the very top of it "the mountain of the Lord's house." No man can climb any higher than the top of the mountain; nor will the human race ever be given any other, or any better, gospel than that proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles. It is the full, perfect and eternal gospel, for all ages, all places and all races of mankind, Matt 28:19, Rev. 14:6.

(3) "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear," says Jesus. Plant a grain of corn, and you will get, first a blade, then a stalk, then an ear, and finally the full grain in the ear. The full grain in the ear is the finished product of the seed's germinal development. *You can not get anything more.* The proper thing to do is to harvest the ear and throw away the husks;

yet it seems that some people prefer to feed on the husks.

(4) If you have ever been in a cornfield, you have found on certain stalks what is called a "shoot,' or possibly more than one. But if you touch these "shoots," you will find they are little more than "black dust." There are thousands of people to-day who are feeding on "black dust" (Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science, Joe Smith and Mormonism, Pastor Russell and the International Bible Students, Mrs. Ellen G. White and "Readings for the Home Circle," etc.). If you want the corn, you must accept the gospel as preached by the apostles. I have nothing to offer you now but the pure, unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Should all the forms which men devise
Attack my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

XX

CAN ONE BE A CHRISTIAN OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:12-17.

Text: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live." —Rom. 8:13.

We are living in an age of indifference to spiritual ideals and aspirations. Materialistic development, progress in invention and industry, the game of big business—all these things seem to have deadened our finer sensibilities.

Among the people who live in so-called Christian nations, ignorance of the Bible is amazing. This condition prevails, not only among those who have never made any profession of Christianity, but among church members as well. The family altar, with its service of Bible reading and prayer, has practically disappeared. Young men preparing for the Christian ministry are taught all the prevailing theories *about* the Bible, but they are given very little instruction in the Bible itself. The result is that even the pulpit no longer rings out with the old-time Bible message; and the masses, unable to find time to read the Bible themselves, and failing to receive proper instruction from the pulpit, are drifting into a state of indifference which is alarming.

This general condition is illustrated quite well by the story of two men prominent in the political life of the nation, one of whom, in the course of a friendly conversation on the subject of religion, wagered the other that the latter could not repeat

the Lord's Prayer. The challenge was accepted and each man put up a five dollar bill. "Now," said the first, "Let's hear it." The other, quite pompously, began:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

"Well, well," said the challenger, in astonishment, "I didn't think you could do it. Here, take your five dollars." The incident is amusing, yet it surely reveals the existence of a condition which is quite general, and, incidentally, most tragic. The decadence of religion among any people is always followed by a corresponding breakdown in moral and social standards.

Strange to say, however, the one subject on which every human being has some sort of an opinion is *religion*. People who never darken a church door except for an occasional funeral service, and who never see a Bible only when they see it on the altar of some fraternal order, are always ready to discuss the subject of religion; and usually the less they know, the longer and louder they talk.

Modern newspapers are making a practice of publishing articles setting forth the opinions of prominent men who have been interviewed on the subject of religion, the Bible, and modern science. Not so long ago, the late Luther Burbank expressed his views of immortality in the columns of the daily press. Such men as Thomas A. Edison, Clarence Darrow, Henry Ford, and the like, are periodically breaking into print on the subject of religion. The popular writer, Mr. Bruce Barton, recently published two books entitled, *The Man Nobody Knows* and *The Book Nobody Knows*. At present the two volumes are being run serially in several metropolitan dailies. They are very entertaining books; rhe-

torically forceful; racy in style, at times dramatic. But any student of the Bible who will take time to read them will detect at a glance that they are historically and Scripturally inaccurate in many instances. They contain assertions that are glaringly untrue, and that would not have been made had the author been informed on his subject. Moreover, the titles smack of egotism. To presume to write under such titles is to assume that the author is the only human being who is qualified to write about Jesus and the Bible. I presume that, since "nobody knows" much about Jesus and the Bible, Mr. Barton felt it incumbent upon himself to turn on the light. Mr. Frank Crane, another newspaper writer, has published a book entitled, *Why I Am A Christian*. While the book has considerable *ethical* value, yet I am not convinced, after reading it, that the author *is* a Christian. I doubt very much if he has ever complied with the requirements imposed by New Testament authority to make one a Christian. I may be in error on this point; if so, I am willing to stand corrected.

I wonder how much time these men have spent in honestly investigating the Bible. How well qualified are they to speak through the daily press on the subject of religion? If you were to ask me to express an opinion for publication on the subject of civil engineering, I would reply at once: "I am unable to oblige you. I can not express an intelligent opinion on that subject, because I know so little about it." I believe that all men should treat the Bible with the same sense of justice and fair play.

People who make no profession of church membership are prone to air their views on religious matters. They thoughtlessly say: "There isn't anything in a name."

"One church is as good as another." "It doesn't make any difference to me what church I join as they are all aiming for the same place." "Yes, I know I should belong to *some* church but I have no particular preference." "Whatever a man thinks is right, that is right to him." "It doesn't make any difference what one believes if one is sincere," etc., etc., etc. Those who know their Bibles will never be heard uttering such platitudes. Nor would the man of the world argue that one suit of clothes is as good as another, or that one brand of cigars is just as good as another. People will use common sense occasionally in everyday matters, but they insist on using everything but common sense in matters of religion.

The popular idea seems to be that men have one set of faculties for matters of business and everyday life, and an entirely different set of faculties for religion. This *mystical* idea is the chief stock-in-trade of denominationalism. We can see from observation that in matters pertaining to their souls, people as a rule use less common sense than in any other problem of human life. Such an idea is contrary to the teaching of our Lord. Jesus made Christianity a very *practical* thing; in fact, He divided the whole human race intotwo classes, those who hear His sayings and do them, and those who hear His sayings but do them not. There will be just two classes in the Judgment: the obedient and the disobedient, Matt. 7:24-27. Jesus expects us to find out what He wants us to do, and then He expects us to do it. "If ye love me," He says, "ye will keep my commandments."

My theme is an interrogation: Can one be a Christian outside the church? I don't know of a term more fre-

quently misused and misapplied than the term "Christian." I have heard men of the world say: "I am not a member of the church, but I am trying hard to be a Christian." Or, "I am just as good a Christian as most of those who belong to the church, and a better one than some of them." The prevailing idea among non-churchmen is that being a good citizen, or possibly a good Mason, Odd Fellow, etc., is equivalent to being a Christian. I am not opposed to fraternal orders provided they keep their proper place; but they are not to be substituted for the church. They are human; the church is divine. Frequently I hear it said, "If the church would just do what the lodges are doing, there wouldn't be so many lodges." To which I reply: "If it were possible to interest people in the church as they seem to be interested in lodges, the church *could* do what the lodges are doing, and more, for that matter." Membership in a fraternal or ethical society does not save one from sin, nor does it make one a Christian, the popular idea to the contrary nothwithstanding. There will be many sad disillusionments in the day of judgment.

> "Brother, let me say this to you: you are on one side or the other. I recollect once at a county camp-meeting a gentleman approached me and said: 'I'm mighty glad to see this grand work going on here. I hope this whole community will be saved.' 'Well,' I said, 'thank you, brother. What church do you belong to?' He said, 'I don't belong to the church, but I'm a Christian.' I said: 'You a Christian, and do not belong to any church! Why, you are the man I've been looking for, lo, these many years. I've offered a reward—a large reward —for one of your sort. Christians are sort of scarce in the church, and the Lord knows I didn't know there was one out of the church. I've found an anomaly in the moral universe of God—a Christian out of the church!' And I said to him:

'I am mighty glad to meet you, sir. Now, this afternoon, when I call up the penitents, I want to call on you to pray for them.' 'Oh no,' he says, 'I can't pray in public.' 'Why?' 'Because I am not a member of the church.' 'Well,' said I, 'when the service is over this afternoon, take one of the boys—one of the penitents—out from the altar and go out into the woods and pray with him.' 'Oh, no, I can't do that.' 'Why?' 'Because I'm not a member of the church, Mr. Jones.' 'Well,' said I, 'can't you just take one of the boys by the arm and carry him off into the woods and talk with him about Christ?' 'No,' he said, 'my trouble is I'm not a member of the church.' 'No, sir,' said I, 'that isn't your trouble. Your trouble is you belong to the devil from your hat to your heels! That's your trouble!' 'He that is not with Me, is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad.' "

—Sam Jones, *Revival Sermons*, pp. 60-61.

The popular idea of what it means to be a Christian is illustrated quite forcefully by a story related by Arthur Talmage Abernethy, *Center Shots at Sin*, p. 102. As the story goes, a traveler was shipwrecked on a desert island. He was frightened out of his skin and lived in hourly expectation of being pounced upon and devoured by natives. Finally after several days of hiding, hunger drove him to explore a bit in search of food. On one of his forays, he discovered a thin wisp of smoke curling upward out of a clump of trees. He was almost afraid to venture in the direction of the smoke, for he had visions of being served on a platter to make a cannibal holiday. But he mustered up sufficient courage, wriggled up close to the spot indicated by the smoke, and got himself in a position where he could peep through the underbrush. Just then he heard a voice saying, "Why the blankety-blank-blank-blank don't you play the ace of spades?" Throwing up his hands in relief, he let out a yell and exclaimed, "Thank God, they're Christians!" This incident describes quite clearly the average man-of-the-world's conception of a Christian.

Can one be a Christian outside the church? Let me state the proposition clearly.

1. *The proposition stated negatively:* (1) I am not discussing the question of *salvation* outside the visible church.

(a) If there were no salvation for any one outside the visible church, what about those who lived in the Patriarchal dispensation? What about those who lived under the Jewish law? What about the untold millions of heathen people who have never had the opportunity of hearing the gospel? What about the unknowing babe who has not reached the age of accountability?

(b) In the *Epistle to the Romans*, ch. 2, Paul lays down the general principle that *all peoples and individuals shall be judged by the measure of moral and spiritual light which they may possess.* "For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law," v. 12. Here the apostle alludes to Gentiles and to the heathen world in general. While they have neither the law of Moses nor the gospel, yet they have always had certain moral standards handed down by tradition; and those standards will constitute the moral law by which they shall be judged. "And as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law," meaning that all who lived under the law of Moses, i. e., until that law was abrogated, shall be judged by the law of Moses. "For when Gentiles (heathens) that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." That is, those nations which have no revealed law, which are

living in the dim light of natural religion, even without any revelation from God, have certain moral standards. All of them love the truth; all of them hate lying, thievery, profanity, etc. Among such people, each person becomes a law unto himself, and in the end will be judged by the light which he chances to have. These moral laws were handed down from the early fathers of mankind who received them direct from God. Each individual heathen will be finally judged by the moral or spiritual light which he possesses, his own conscience either excusing or accusing him in the judgment. Of course his enjoyment of heaven will be far inferior to a Christian's enjoyment of it. The principle that *one's enjoyment of a blessing is always limited by his capacity to enjoy it*, runs throughout all nature. I can set a cup full of water on the table, and by its side a pitcher also full. The cup and the pitcher are alike in one respect —*both are full.* But there is more water in the pitcher than in the cup because the pitcher has a greater capacity than the cup. Some are going to enjoy heaven more than others because they are more spiritually trained. The man who spends his life faithfully serving Christ will surely get more out of heaven than the man who gives only a few years to His service. Paul says, "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon," etc., 1 Cor. 15:41. In the heavenly world God's people will shine with varying degrees of luster proportionate to their capacity, capacity having been enlarged by *training* and *service.* Just as the brain is developed by *thinking*, so the soul is enlarged by *serving.* The following, then, is a summation of Paul's argument in the second chapter of *Romans:* (1) Those who lived and died under the law of Moses will be judged by that law. (2) Those who

live in the dim light of natural religion will be judged by their individual moral standards. (3) Those who live under the gospel will be judged by the gospel. One can see at a glance where this puts the Jew; living under the gospel, yet he rejects it and thereby makes his disobedience almost unpardonable.

(2) I am not discussing cases of so-called "death-bed repentance." Many an old reprobate becomes exceedingly "sorry" for his sins when he sees death staring him in the face. Generally, however, such sorrow is motivated by *fear*, not by love for God. I doubt very much if there is such a thing as "death-bed repentance." Sorrow for sin isn't repentance, but the cause of repentance, 2 Cor. 7:10. Repentance is actual *turning* from sin. The man who waits until he is physically unable to *turn* from sin can't very well repent. He can't change his life—there isn't any left to change. He can't be baptized Scripturally, because he isn't physically able. When a man waits until he reaches the place that he is physically unable to comply with the terms of pardon, all that he can do is throw himself on the mercy of God. If there is any salvation for him, it will be a special salvation which the Lord, in His divine mercy, shall grant him and which has not been revealed in the New Testament. Christ frequently forgave sinners while He was on earth *in person*, such as the penitent thief; but when He returned to the Father He incorporated a law of pardon in His last will and testament. If He pardons any outside the terms of that will, that will be His business and not mine. I have not yet undertaken to transact the Lord's business for Him.

(3) Neither am I discussing hypothetical cases. My opponent in debate some years ago, Mr. John A.

Musgrave of West Frankfort, Ill., a Baptist, presented the hypothetical case of a man on board ship or in a boat. Suppose, he argued, that such a man under such conditions, miles away from land, were to be "converted" unexpectedly, and being in such circumstances that he couldn't be baptized, were to die before he got back to shore, would he be lost? It is quite characteristic of the spirit of denominationalism to always be presenting such hypothetical cases, asking what the Lord would do in cases where the sinner can't do what the Lord requires. Denominationalists are always fond of *negatives*. Their fondness for suppositions is quite similar to that of the ancient Pharisees and Sadducees who were bringing similar cases to our Lord's attention, as, for example, the woman with so many husbands. In answer to Mr. Musgrave's question, no doubt in such cases God will accept the *will* to do the act for the act itself—at least that is my humble opinion. At any rate a person who can't be baptized when he has an ocean of water under him ought to go to perdition.

I am reminded of a similar case presented to one of our pioneer preachers by a good Presbyterian sister, who argued: "Suppose a man were on top of a high mountain and were to suddenly find his life endangered by wild beasts. Suppose he were to repent under such circumstances, and soon thereafter be killed, without having had any opportunity of being baptized, would he be lost?" To this the old preacher, veteran of many debates, replied: "My good sister, since you are *supposing* all this, then *suppose* that we *suppose* it's all a joke." The trouble with a great many people is that they are all the time *supposing*, when they should be obeying the gospel.

(4) Nor am I discussing the question of *infant salvation.* Rom. 4:14—"where there is no law, neither is there transgression." Rom. 5:13—"Sin is not imputed when there is no law." How can the infant have any law or any knowledge of the law? It is governed solely by *instinct.* My Bible teaches me that Jesus died on the Cross to purchase the salvation of mankind, and that by His death He purchased the salvation of the innocent and irresponsible *unconditionally.* The infant needs no salvation—it has nothing to be saved from. Oh, you say, how about "original sin?" My reply is that "original sin" exists only in the lingo of theology. While we all suffer the *consequences* of the sin of Adam and the sins of our fathers, there isn't a particle of Bible evidence that we must bear the *guilt* of the sins of our forefathers? The divine law is: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," Ezek. 18:19-20. Jesus has said that the kingdom of heaven is in the heart of a little child, and that, unless we turn and become as little children, we shall not be allowed to enter the kingdom. It is not very often that I express *opinions* from the pulpit, but I will make one exception to this rule at the present time. It is my *opinion* that the term, *kingdom of Christ,* is broader than the term, *church,* in the fact that the kingdom includes the innocent and irresponsible, whereas the church includes only accountable human beings.

(5) Nor am I parading any "intermediate world" theories. A great many people believe that Jesus, during the three days His body was in Joseph's tomb, conducted a post-mortem evangelistic campaign somewhere, in which he preached to the untold millions of preceding dispensations who had never heard the gospel and who had been herded together in some sort of an

intermediate world in the interim. I am not inclined to such fanciful theories. I don't count much on the existence of any *purgatory* outside Roman Catholic theology. The Catholic priesthood clings tenaciously to the dogma of purgatory—for *business* reasons, no doubt. Protestants, however, are not so enthusiastic about the idea.

2. *The proposition stated positively.* The question I propose to answer is this: Can an accountable human being, who lives in a land where the gospel is preached, be a Christian outside the church? Can a man or woman, living in this city, where church spires rear themselves toward heaven in great numbers, be a Christian outside the visible church? The answer depends upon the following: *What is necessary to make one a Christian in the light of Bible teaching?* Or, What is a Christian from the Bible viewpoint?

3. *Bible meaning of the term "Christian."* The term "Christian" is used in various ways in common parlance. For instance, (1) One may be "Christian" in *nationality*. America is known as a "Christian" nation, not that every American citizen is a Christian, but that the nation has been founded on Christian principles. Bob Ingersoll would have been referred to as a "Christian," in Turkey, because he was a citizen of a Christian nation. I imagine that if Clarence Darrow were to make a trip to China, our Chinese friends would speak of him as a "Christian;" as a matter of fact he is an enemy of religion. (2) Again, one may be "Christian" in one's principles. A man may be honest, upright, strictly reliable in all his dealings, a good citizen in the worldly sense of the term, and thoroughly respectable. These are Christian principles and the world would speak of such a man as a

Christian. The great Abraham Lincoln was certainly Christian in his principles of everyday life, if such can be said of any man who lives and dies outside the church; yet, with all due respect to the memory of Mr. Lincoln, he was not a Christian *in fact.* (3) To be a Christian *in fact,* something is needed in addition to respectability and good citizenship, if the Bible is true. That something is *adoption into the family of God.*

4. *Adoption a necessity.* Refer to our text, particularly verses 15-17. Also Gal. 4:5-6, Eph. 1:5. Suppose you were to go to the Orphans' Home, secure a child therefrom, and bring that child into your home. If you allow the child to grow up in your home without having it legally adopted, how much of your estate will that child receive at your death? Not a penny. On the other hand, if you have the child legally adopted, how much of your estate will it receive? It will receive an equal portion along with your natural heirs. What is the application? All Christians are seeking a heavenly inheritance, 1 Pet. 1:4. But no one has any promise of that inheritance until he or she has been *adopted* into the divine family. Returning to our previous illustration, that child which you get from the Orphans' Home will not be entitled to your *family name* until it is adopted into your family. It follows that one who has not been adopted into the divine family is not entitled to the family name, which is the name "Christian." In other words, Jesus is the Son of God by birth; Christians are children of God by *adoption;* and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and *joint*-heirs with Jesus Christ. Another thing in this connection: Granting that you allow the child which you get from the Orphans' Home to grow up in your family without adoption, does that

child have any right to look to you as its legal father? Certainly not—you do not become its legal father until the child is adopted. How, then, does any one who has never been Scripturally adopted into God's family have the right to address God as "Father?" Is not the privilege of saying, "Our Father who art in heaven," a privilege vouchsafed the Christian only? My contention is that prayer is the privilege of the Christian, not of the unconverted. Jesus has said, "No one cometh unto the Father but by me;" and without a Mediator, what means of access to the Father has the unconverted man or woman?

5. *Adoption defined and explained.* The question now arises: What is adoption and how consummated? Adoption is the process by which an alien is made a member of the household of faith. Eph. 2:19-22. In the sense that it is accompanied by forgiveness of sin, it is also termed *salvation.* In the sense that the sinner is justified before God, it is termed *justification.* In the sense that the sinner is born again, it is called *regeneration.* In the sense that the sinner has been consecrated to Christ, it is called *sanctification.* How is this process of adoption achieved and consummated?

(1) The Father *planned* the privilege and law of adoption as a part of His eternal purpose. Eph. 1:3-5. Foreordination applies to *classes*, not *individuals.* "The elect are the whosoever-will's; the non-elect are the whosoever-won't's." It was the plan of redemption that was foreordained. There is no doctrine of personal election to heaven or hell in the Bible.

One of our evangelistists relates the story of how Senator Vance of North Carolina once twitted his old colored servant on the subject of religion. The old colored man had asked

the Senator to become a Christian. He replied: "I can't exactly understand the subject of election. I don't know whether the Lord has elected me or not." The old negro was equal to the emergency. "Massa Zeb," he replied, "ah can splain dat question ob 'lection. You see, no man ebber gwine be 'lected to office dat don't fust 'nounce his self as a candidate. I nebber heah yo'-all 'nounce yo'self yet foh de kingdom of hebben. Now, yo' see, yo' 'nounce yo'self, den de Lawd he votes foh yo,' an' de debbil he votes agin' yo.' Den yo'-all votes foh yo' self, and you and de Lord makes a majority, an' yo's 'lected."

(2) This privilege of adoption planned by the Father was *purchased*, or secured, by the Son. God made the plan, but the Son executed it. 1 Pet. 1:18-21.

(3) This privilege of adoption planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, is *realized* through the agency of the Holy Spirit. John 3:5, 1 Pet. 1:23. The Word is the spiritual seed, Luke 8:11. In the process of regeneration, the Father is the *source*, the Spirit the *agent*, the preacher the *instrumentality*, the Word the *means*, and the water the *element*. 1 Cor. 4:15, Jas. 1:18. Baptism, the consummating act of the process, is called "the washing of regeneration," Tit. 3:5, As a consequence of faith, repentance and baptism, we receive the "Spirit of adoption" as the seal of our profession, Eph. 1:13, 4:30, and the "earnest" (i. e., pledge, cf. "earnest" money) of our inheritance.

6. *The blessings of adoption.* These are:

(1) *A change of relationship*, Matt. 28:19, Eph. 2:19-20, Col. 1:13, Heb. 12:22-24.

(2) *Fatherly correction*, Heb. 12:5-11.

(3) *Fatherly protection*, Heb. 1:14, Eph. 2:19, Rom. 8:28.

(4) *A divine mediator*, 1 John 2:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Rom. 8:26.

(5) *A new name*, Isa. 62:2, 65:15; Acts 11:26.

(6) *Prayer*, John 14:6, 14.

(7) *A heavenly home*, John 14:1-3.

(8) *A heavenly body* (immortality), Rom. 2:7, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:42-44.

(9) *A heavenly inheritance*, Eph. 1:14, Heb. 9:15, 1 Pet. 1:4.

Conclusion: Can one be a Christian outside the church? No. No more than a child of another family can wear your name until it has been adopted into your family. No one is entitled to the name "Christian" before his adoption into God's family. To be adopted into the family of God, you must be "born again;" you must believe in Christ, accept Him as your Savior, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Christ, Gal. 3:26-27. One who is in Christ is in the church of Christ, because the church is the body of Christ; and one who is in the body of Christ is in the family of God and is entitled to the name "Christian."

If you can be a Christian outside the church, what need have we for the church? *Why did God put the church in the world?* God did not create birds until He had first created the firmament in which they were to live and move and have their being. God did not create fishes until He had first created the water in which they were to live. God did not create man until He had first created the world with all of its blessings and resources for man's benefit. If the air was made for birds, the water for fishes, the land for animals, and the world for man, it follows that the church was established for Christians. No one can be a Christian who ignores

the church of Christ; nor can any one be a Christian *in fact* outside the church of Christ.

The name *Christian* is the divine family name. It is all-comprehensive; it includes everything. Were you to ask me, "Are you a Presbyterian?"—I would reply, "Yes, I am a presbyterian, but not a member of the Presbyterian Church. Presbyter means elder, and I am a presbyterian because I am an elder." I am a believer in methods, that everything should be decent and orderly in the church; therefore I am a methodist, but not a member of the Methodist Church. I baptize people, therefore I am a baptist, or immersionist; but I am not a member of the Baptist Church. I don't need any of these qualifying names. I am just a Christian and a member of the church of Christ. I am a Christian because the name is divine and because it carries with it everything that is essential to Christian faith, worship and life.

The human race, in its effort to weld itself into one family, has tried various means and methods. Ambitious rulers have tried the *sword*. Great conquerors—Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon—attempted to bind the nations of the earth into an empire of world-wide scope by the use of military power, but they all failed. Another means employed was *ecclesiasticism*. Witness the gigantic effort of the Roman Church to organize all men into one family with a visible head claiming both spiritual and temporal power. But this plan was a failure, too; instead of promoting peace, it drenched the earth with blood and sowed the soil with the bones of countless martyrs. In the last few years we have been trying other schemes. We are now told that *commercial interests* will ultimately weld the nations

into a unit. We are experimenting with a League of Nations, a World Court, and other schemes of internationalism, with their powerful weapon of commercial boycott. Lodges have flourished widely in recent years; men are trying to achieve brotherhood on a human basis; trying to substitute a fraternalism that is "of the earth, earthy," for a divine brotherhood such as outlined in the New Testament. While some of these things may have their place in human affairs, yet I am convinced they will never bring about the true brotherhood of man.

There is just one sytem yet to be tried—the Cross of Christ and the Christian faith. The reason why these human schemes have failed is because they overlook the words of our text: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body ye shall live." No brotherhood that is built upon a fleshly basis can hope to be permanent. The divine brotherhood— the only brotherhood recognized in heaven—is not to be built upon selfishness, nor upon autocracy nor upon trade, nor upon mere ethical foundations—it must be built on *love*. Love is the "more excellent way." This divine brotherhood can be built and extended only by bringing men and women *into Christ* and into the church of Christ. The church of Christ is the only divine brotherhood in all the world. It is the family of God. You have the privilege of becoming a member of that divine family now, if you will only accept Christ as your Savior and walk in His steps.

XXI

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN*

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:37-47.

Text: "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved."—Acts 2:47.

Our text is the closing sentence of the chapter which narrates the incidents of that memorable first Pentecost after the resurrection. In this chapter we find the first gospel sermon that was ever preached. We read that, at the close of the sermon, a great multitude cried out unto Peter and the other apostles, asking what they must do to be saved. The apostle replied: "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." They asked what to do, were told what to do in plain terms, and did what they were told to do, and the Lord "added them together" (marginal rendering). As the work went on, the Lord kept on adding day by day those that were saved.

Our text is given in the *Authorized Version* as follows: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The marginal rendering of the *Revised*

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*Much of the subject-matter herein is adapted from sermon by Geo. H. Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, pp. 79-94.

Version: "And the Lord *added together* day by day those that were saved." *Goodspeed's Translation* reads: "And every day the Lord added people who were saved to their number." *Living Oracles:* "And the Lord daily added the saved to the congregation." *Moffatt's Translation:* "Meantime the Lord added the saved daily to their number." Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech:* "Also, day by day, the Lord added to their number those whom He was saving." *Twentieth Century New Testament:* "And the Lord daily added to their company those who were in the path of salvation."

The idea conveyed by the text is that those who obeyed the commands of the gospel were *added together*, i. e., formed into a body. The thought suggested is that of an *incorporation.* The significant truth of the text is that the *Lord did the adding*, or incorporating. This new incorporation was the church, or body, of Christ in Jerusalem.

Now the important question is: *How did they become Christians?* Over what pathway had they come? What had they done to merit being "added together?" I have selected this incident because it was the first case of gospel preaching; the first time the question, "What must I do?" was asked and answered; the story of the establishment of the first church of Christ in all the world. The church in Jerusalem has been styled "the model church of the New Testament." It is our pattern. If we can find out how these people became members of that church, we can then know what we must do to become Christians and members of the same church.

This matter of becoming a Christian, like everything else in Christian faith and worship, is an individual and personal matter. We do not become Christians through

force of circumstances, nor by the words or acts of others. We can not become Christians *by proxy*. You may think you can take your little babe to the minister or priest and have him sprinkle or pour some water on its head, and that by so doing you have guranteed the salvation of your child. But there is no such thing in Christianity as parents achieving the salvation of their children, or vice versa. This matter of becoming a Christian is a personal matter—one that can not be determined by one's citizenship, nor accomplished by one's parents, friends, or society. Nor can you hide behind a hypocrite in refusing to become a Christian. You are responsible to God only for your own conduct—we shall each be judged according to the deeds done in the flesh.

There is a *divine* side to this matter of becoming a Christian, but that is not a part of this sermon. What God has done for us, and what He will do, is not included in this discussion. God has given His Son, the Son has given His life, and the Spirit has given the Word. The God side of salvation comprises grace, atonement, and revelaton; then later on, pardon; and ultimately, resurrection and immortalization. The question for our consideration now is this: What are *you* to do to become a Christian? What must you do to be saved?

I would also impress upon your minds in unforgettable terms that this is the most important matter that can ever come up in your life. Other matters are important. *Health*, for instance, is important; physical vigor is a great blessing. *Mind development* is another important concern; education has come to be a matter of necessity if one gets on in the world to any extent. *Fame* seems to be a matter of great moment to some people. Some

people will "fall out" with their friends and neighbors over some petty office in the club or lodge. But fame is very elusive; we are a race of forgetters and we soon lose sight of our so-called great. Just a short time ago one of the most famous of motion picture stars, Rudolph Valentino, passed out of the picture. Great throngs came to view his body as it lay in state; fame he had of a certain kind. But how long will it last? Popularity is very fickle; the people who crown their heroes to-day are liable to crucify them tomorrow. Again, the business of *making a living* is important; a great many people exert so much energy in making a living that they forget all about their souls, which proves that in some cases the good may become the enemy of the best. Frequently I hear people crying over their mistakes. If I had just done this or that, they say, I would now be wealthy. "What must I do to be rich?" is the question uppermost in their minds. *Riches*, however, are about as elusive and uncertain as fame.

Capper's Weekly, in an issue of about a year ago, told about two men, both of whom had achieved wealth. One was Wm. Rockefeller, who left an estate valued at $100,000,000. The other man was a man in Atchison, Kansas, who had for forty years run a peanut stand in that city and who had acquired a modest fortune from the business. For over forty years Grice's peanut stand had been a landmark in Atchison. Wearing a woman's kitchen apron, Grice quietly sold his product to hundreds of customers. Rain or shine, he was always on the job. He died at the age of seventy-nine and left an estate valued at $100,000. These two men were very much alike in method; both were honest, both gave value received, both rendered faithful service to their customers, and both prospered. They were alike in another respect, too: *they both died*; and when they died, *they couldn't take a dollar with them.* At the end of the road, they were both on the same

footing. Their wealth was useless; it was insufficient to bribe death away. They found that their forty years spent in amassing wealth had practically been wasted.

All these things—health, education, making a living, popularity, riches—are secondary to the supreme consideration, which is, *What must I do to please God?* All are secondary to the matter of *how to become a Christian.* This matter of becoming a Christian is the most important consideration of human life. *Yet how few treat it as such!* Some wait until their hair is gray, their step feeble, their form tottering—until one foot is in the grave—before they think about it seriously. Some will give the fatness of their lives to the devil, then at the last moment throw the husks to God. Some forget about this matter of becoming and being a Christian until it is everlastingly too late. Yes—this is a matter which many people find it easy to forget.

What must I do to become a Christian? Let us approach our answer from a scientific and logical viewpoint. Let us look at it from the viewpoint of man's constitution. There are just four ways in which the soul can express itself: through *thinking*, *feeling*, *deciding* and *acting*. I believe this will be agreed to by all psychologists. You express yourself through your *intellect*, through your *feelings*, through your *will*, and through your *acts*. Indeed I know of no other way in which you can express yourself. These are the only roads over which you can go to anything. Let us now see how these four avenues of expression may be applied to the matter of becoming a Christian.

I. *Thoughts.* If you are to become a Christian, you must first express yourself through *thoughts.* Now *thinking* must be the result of an impression received

through the avenue of the physical senses. "Faith cometh of hearing"—Rom. 10:17. So far as the gospel is concerned, hearing is first; then when one *hears*, one *thinks;* when one thinks connectedly, one *reasons;* when one reasons rightly, one *understands*. Finally, understanding leads to *believing*, and believing leads to *turning*. Matt. 13:15. It is quite evident, then, that in the matter of becoming a Christian, the first thing of importance is what *one must believe* in order to become a Christian. That which one must believe is one's *creed*. A man cannot be anything without a creed. Every church must have a creed. The creed is foundational. It is fundamental. A man's creed is the basis of his life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." No man will get very far in life unless he is urged on by some mighty belief which has become a conviction that grips his soul, shapes his life and determines his destiny.

What, then, is the Christian's creed? It must possess *five* characteristics: It must be exceedingly *simple*. That which is intended for the masses must of necessity be very simple that they may be able to grasp it. The Christian creed must be void of all theological hair-splitting or scientific intricacies. It must be equally *broad*. It must be broad enough to include all varieties of theological opinion. It must be *expansive*, i. e., capable of being adjusted to one's mental development. It must be *heaven-sent*. It is God's business, not mine, to determine what creed will be satisfactory to Him. It must be *Scriptural*. It must be found in the New Testament.

I want a creed that is exceedingly *simple*. If every one had to stop and think his way through all the intricacies of theology, in order to become a Christian, there

wouldn't be many Christians in the world. I have in my library three volumes of *Systematic Theology*, by Dr. A. H. Strong. They are very fine, very exhaustive, very profound. Yet if I, myself, had to find my way through those three volumes before I could become a Christian, I am afraid I would give up in despair and not even try. The Christian creed must be something very plain and simple, because it is intended for all people, high and low, rich and poor, illiterate and educated, alike.

Again, I want a *growing* creed. I expect to grow mentally and spiritually; my creed must be able to grow as I grow. That is a tragic day in the life of the young man in his early teens when he discovers that he has outgrown his trousers. But to outgrow one's creed, to have to revise it, patch it, amend it, is a greater tragedy. I want a creed that I can never outgrow.

Now a creed that can not be outgrown must be a creed *sent down from heaven.* It must come from God.

> "When Handel was an old man of eighty-three, he witnessed one time in Moscow the rendition of his world-famous 'Messiah,' and after the rendition he was called to the platform and greeted with such applause as could come only from an audience stirred to its depths by that tremendous miracle of composition. But he could not make the speech they wanted him to make; indeed, he could say nothing, so shaken was he by his sobbing, until at last he gathered himself together, and, pointing upward, said: 'It came from yonder.' Every good thing comes down from the skies, and a Christian's creed must, like Christianity itself, have been born above."
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> —Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, p. 83.

Further, my creed must have *Scriptural authority* back of it. It must be found in the New Testament. There are many cases in the New Testament of people becoming Christians. They believed a certain thing

and, acting upon their belief, complied with the gospel commands, and the Lord added them to the church. I don't want anything in my faith and worship that is not as old as the New Testament; therefore my creed must be revealed in the New Testament.

Suppose we apply these tests to the formulated creeds of Christendom, what is the result? We shall find that not a single one of the written creeds is capable of standing a single one of our tests. These denominational creeds are not simple, but complex, filled with all sorts of theory and speculation and dogma. They are not capable of growth nor expansion, for we know that quite frequently they have to be altered and revised in certain particulars. They have not come down from heaven; on the contrary they have been formulated by uninspired men. They are not to be found in the New Testament; they have all come into existence since the close of New Testament history. The creed that was made at Nice, the one made at Augsburg, the one made at Westminster, and all other denominational creeds—all fail in every single particular.

What, then, was the creed of these early Christians? See Matt. 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10. "The creed of the living church of the living God *is the living, ever-living Christ.*" Christ is our creed; the New Testament is our book of discipline. This creed is very simple—it has only one article of faith. It is expansive. It was heaven-sent: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." It has the authority of the New Testament back of it. This divine creed—Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God—meets every requirement.

It is the only universal creed—and the only creed upon which the unity of God's people can possibly be achieved.

II. *Feelings.* Then, if you are to become a Christian, you must express yourself through your feelings as well as through your intellect. One's emotions are infinitely more complex and unexplainable than one's thoughts. This is the reason why *woman*, who is largely emotional, is infinitely more complex than *man*, who is largely intellectual. I must confess that I have never understood, and never expect to understand, woman. Woman acts as she feels, and does her thinking after she acts; man usually thinks before he acts. Woman is guided by impulse, man by cold-blooded reasoning. Women can be reached more quickly by an appeal to her emotions than by an appeal to her intellect. Woman will often act in direct opposition to her better judgment, when swayed by her emotions. Emotions range more widely than intellect. Emotions are frequently born with us and in us; they are a part of our heredity and belong to our varying temperaments.

What should one feel in order to become a Christian? Should one feel that he has been the chief of sinners? Not in all cases, by any means. Was it necessary that your little boy, who became a Christian when he was ten or twelve years old, who had never strayed outside the evergreen fields of innocence to any extent, feel that he was chief of sinners? Should the sheltered girl, who has grown up in a Christian home, and has blossomed out into a pure, virtuous, modest young woman, have to feel that she is chief of sinners before she can hope to become a Christian? I sincerely hope not. I hope she will never know sin as a matter of experience; I hope she

will always dwell in Edenic gardens of loveliness; I hope she will always be the same flower that she was in her tiny cradle or when she sat at mother's knee with the sunlight playing over her childish tresses. "Chief of sinners"—this is the stock-in-trade of the emotional revivalist. Certainly one who has been a chief of sinners, as, for instance, the Prodigal Son, must feel keenly the awfulness of his sins, before he can become a Christian; this consciousness of sin is a prerequisite of repentance in such cases. But it is not well for the crystal soul who has wandered very little from the narrow path, who has only faintly experienced sin—it is not well for such a person to have any deep consciousness of sin. As a matter of fact it is impossible for one who has never experienced sin to any great degree to have any deep-seated consciousness of sin.

What, then, must one feel in order to be a Christian? I'll tell you—*one must feel a positive hatred of sin.* It is quite apparent that, in these days of moral laxity, we are losing sight of the fact that God *hates* sin, that Christ *hated* it, and that we must *hate* it if we are genuine Christians. Sin means hurt, it means discord, it means destruction, it means bitterness, it nailed Jesus to the cross. We must positively *hate* sin. We must hate deceit, treachery, theft, adultery, covetousness, profanity, worldliness—hate these things, I say. Such genuine hatred of sin is not realized in the human heart until one learns to appreciate the *loveliness* of Jesus. The one who loves Jesus Christ, and hates sin, has experienced the emotions necessary to becoming a Christian.

> "We instinctively love the lovely. A vine is prostrate on the ground. You want it to rise, and you speak to it: 'Little vine, get up out of the dust, so that you may breathe the sweet

pure atmosphere of heaven.' It can not do it. Its tendrils are reaching everywhere for a support by which to rise. You see this, and place the trellis within reach, and it begins to climb towards the sun. It needs no command, nor exhortation, but a trellis. The babe, cooing on its mother's bosom, needs not to be told to love her. The heart tendrils will fasten themselves about her—if she is lovely. You need not try to make the world love you. Only be lovely, and the world will do the rest. And so it is in our religious nature. And when Christ, the fairest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely, is presented to the heart, it clasps its arm about the cross, and is lifted up to God. No wonder the Master said, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me' (John 12:32); and no wonder that Paul, the prince of preachers, said, 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2)."

—M. M. Davis, *First Principles*, p. 126.

In order to become a Christian one must feel, therefore, (1) an appreciation of the loveliness of Christ, and (2) an unyielding hatred of sin.

III. *Decisions.* In the third place, if you are to become a Christian, you must express yourself in *decisions.* Decisions are matters of will. Man attains his real greatness only on the mountain peaks of will. When they came to try to persuade Caesar not to go to the place where certain death awaited him, he asked them: "What reason shall I give if I go not?" One said, "Tell them that you *can not* come." Another advised, "Tell them that you *dare* not come." Then said Caesar:

"To say I can not come were false,
To say, I dare not, falser still.
Go tell them Caesar *will* not come."

What must one will in order to become a Christian? Turn to the story that will never die—the story that Charles Dickens has pronounced "the most pathetic

story in all literature"—that of the Prodigal Son. How familiar it is to many of us! First, leaving the father's house, going out to see the world. Then, gayety, enjoyment, mirth unconfined, pleasure voluptuous, debauchery. Finally, sorrow, disillusionment, heartache, despair, loneliness, poverty, hunger and want. And then—decision. "I *will* arise and go to my father." The first turning-point was when he went away from the father's house; the *returning* point was when he decided, "*I will.*"

"I will arise and go to my father"—that was a noble decision. That was a genuine *repentance.* The popular idea of repentance is that it is expressed in terms of emotion. Not so—repentance is expressed in terms of *will.* Sorrow for sin is not repentance, but the cause of repentance, 2 Cor. 7:10. The real repentance lies in the decision, "I will."

> "I was reading last night in a book pilfered yesterday from your minister's library of a somewhat eccentric old preacher, clear-headed and hard-headed, who had listened to a certain Brooklyn preacher talk for an hour on 'repentance,' and he had so wrapped it about with metaphysical subtleties that nobody in the audience knew what the eloquent divine was driving at—so that he acquired a reputation for profundity. When the old man, unable to restrain himself longer, spoke out, 'May I have three minutes, please?' 'Yes.' The old man was sitting back in the auditorium, and he came running down the aisle, exclaiming, 'I am going to hell, I am going to hell!' and the audience was shocked. When he got as far as the altar he turned back up the aisle triumphantly crying, 'I am going to heaven, I am going to heaven!' Then he said, 'That is repentance.' The eloquence of the aisle-march of the eccentric outstripped the word-eloquence of the preacher. That is all there is to it. When a man 'turns,' a man repents. Repentance is not in being sorry about something; it is in the turning and in the ecstasy of resolve, 'I will be a slave of sin no longer.'"
>
> —Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, pp. 88-89.

"But a man complains that he can not tell what repentance is; that the preachers refer to lexicons and learned authorities, and he can not tell what is right. There are but few men who have not already a pretty good idea what repentance is. This can easily be demonstrated. Suppose a man should be immersed and unite with a church, but, in a very short time, be seen reeling from intoxication, using profane and obscene language; what would men of the world say of him? They would, without hestitaion, say he never repented. How do they know, if they do not know what repentance is? The truth is, they know what repentance is, or, at least the fruits that ought to proceed from it. They understand that it ought to be such a change, in some way, whether they can describe it or not, as will result in a good life in time to come. This is true: it is such a change of mind as will result in a good life. No matter whether you know the learned definitions or not, nor whether you can explain precisely *how* the change is; you know it must be such a change in a man as will result in a good life. If the good life does not follow—no matter how much a man tells of wonderful changes, feelings, and emotions within him; of great heart-work, experience, and joys—nobody believes he has truly repented. No man in our day will have much confidence in any great work of grace *within a man*, while there is *no change without*. This shows that there is a pretty correct understanding of what repentance is; that it is a state of mind sufficient to change the life. If a man is traveling for some city, but on the wrong road, he will not turn and take another road till he is convinced that he is going a wrong road—till his mind is changed in regard to the road; nor will any intelligent man believe there is much change in his mind so long as he persists in traveling on the wrong road. But when he turns and earnestly pursues another road, all admit that there is a change in his mind. So, when the sinner turns from his sins and travels another road, there is no doubt the change in his mind."

—Franklin, *Gospel Preacher*, Vol. I., pp. 190-191.

IV. *Acts.* Having now expressed yourself in your thoughts, your feelings, your decisions, you must finally

express yourself in *acts* if you expect to become a Christian. The Prodigal Son arrived at a noble decision—"*I will* arise and go to my Father." He then acted upon that decision—"and he arose and *went*." Samuel Johnson has said: "Words are the daughters of earth, but deeds are the sons of heaven." I believe it was Emerson who once said: "What you *do* speaks to me so loudly that I can not hear what you *say*." See Matt. 7: 1.

Yes, there is something for you to *do* in this matter of becoming a Christian, Acts 2:37, 9:6, 16:30. In facts there are *two* things you must do.

First, you must publicly *confess Christ*, Matt. 10:32-33. This confession, Matt. 16:16, is made "with the mouth" and "unto salvation," Rom. 10:9-10. In the conflict between God and Mammon, between Christ and Satan, between good and evil, you must take sides. You must come out in the open. You must *publicly* declare yourself. You must witness "the good confession."

Second, you must be *buried with Christ in baptism* and raised with Him to walk in a new life, Rom. 6:3-5. The Master has left this specific command, Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:16. It is a part of the great commision, and the true Christian will neither neglect nor minimize it. Specific mention is made of the baptism of every one whose conversion is described in the book of Acts. The three thousand, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian treasurer, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius and his household, Lydia and her household, the Philippian jailer and his household, the Corinthians, including Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue—all were baptized. Even Jesus of Nazareth, Himself, "whiter than the snow of Hermon, purer than the lily of the valley;" "who was tempted in all points

as we are, and yet without sin"—yes, our Lord, Himself, made a journey of more than seventy miles, from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan River, to be baptized by John in the Jordan. "Let it be so this time," said Jesus to John, "for it is right for us to do everything that God requires." (Goodspeed). The waters of the Jordan were forever sanctified by the baptism of the Son of man.

> "He submitted to the appointed rite because He would be one with His brethren in all obedience. 'He also Himself likewise took part of' whatsoever His brethren were partakers of, and therefore He was 'numbered with the transgressors,' in that, needing no repentance, He submitted to the baptism of repentance, and cleansed the cleansing water by being plunged into it."—Maclaren, *Expositions, in loco.*
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> "Jesus, about to begin a new epoch of His life, His true life, bore witness by His immersion in water to His willingness to die, but at the same time to His certainty that He would rise again. He did not go down to the Jordan to cleanse Himself, but to show that His second life was beginning and that He will not die, but only seem to die, just as He only seemed to be purified by the waters of the Jordan."
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> —Papini, *Life of Christ*, p. 61.

I do not propose, in this connection, to enter upon a discussion of the *theology* of baptism. I am not so much concerned about your philosophy or theology of the act of baptism, as I am concerned that you shall be baptized, as an avowal of your faith and a proof of your willingness to obey every command of Christ. I come to you with the plain recital of a duty, which to you should be a great privilege, authorized by the word of Christ and sanctified by His example. If you really want to become a Christian, you will not start an argument here at the baptismal pool. "If ye love me," says

Jesus, "ye will keep my commandments." This is the long of it, this is the short of it, this is the all of it, as regards Christian baptism.

What, now, is the "conclusion of the whole matter?" It is this: The way of reconciliation is very plain—so plain, in fact, that the most ignorant person on earth is left without excuse.

1. You must believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. This belief is born in your heart through *hearing* the gospel preached, through *reasoning* about the evidence offered in support of the facts of the gospel, and through *understanding* the facts, commands and promises of the gospel. You express your thoughts in *faith.*

2. You must *decide* to forsake sin, to turn from the evil way, to come back to the Father's house. You must decide in your heart, "*I will* arise and go to my Father." This is *repentance.*

3. Then—*you must come.* You must *do*—you must *act.* You must *confess* with your lips the faith that is in your heart. This you do when you make "the good confession."

4. Finally, you must be *buried with Christ in baptism.* Baptism is the marriage ceremony which unites you to Christ. It is the consummating act of *conversion.*

In reward for your faith, your repentance, and your obedience, you have the assurance of God's Word that you will be granted remission of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. May God help you to decide now—while we sing! And may God help you, having decided and acted, to be faithful always!

XXII

HOLDING THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 1:3-14.

Text: "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. 1:13.

Introduction: (1) The words of our text are addressed by Paul, an apostle, to Timothy, a young preacher.

(2) Timothy was a young man who had been taught the sacred Scriptures from childhood, 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14-15. He was thus exceptionally prepared to do the work of an evangelist, 2 Tim. 4:5.

(3) The primary work of an evangelist is to preach the Word, 2 Tim. 4:2. Hence we find the first and second epistles to Timothy abounding in exhortations to loyalty to the gospel message and in warnings against false teaching, 1 Tim. 3:14-16, 4:1-7, 6:3-5, 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:1-3, 2:14-26, 3:1-16, 4:1-8, etc.

(4) Paul guarded the gospel message as zealously as a mother guards her child, 1 Tim. 6:20-21, Gal. 1:6-10, 1 Cor. 2:1-5, 9:16.

(5) To "hold the pattern of sound words" is to speak in strictly Scriptural phraseology. Here Paul admonishes Timothy to *adhere* to the doctrine which he had learned, in its *substance* and in its *fruits*. "Sound" doctrine, in this text, suggests healthy, wholesome, health-giving, healing properties. When the body is

sound physically, it is in a state of perfect health; so the teaching which Paul had imparted to Timothy was calculated to reform the lives and save the souls of men; to produce a purer morality, a more unselfish love, a deeper faith in God and man; in short, to bring harmony and health to man's diseased nature. These healing words are to be found in the gospel message, with its facts, commands and promises.

(6) The text does not have reference to any *creedal statement* nor elaborately formulated confession of faith.

> "The notion intended here is not a cut-and-dried creed, but a body of teaching which will not be compressed within the limits of an iron form, but will be a pattern for the lives of the men to whom it is given. The Revised Version has, 'the pattern,' and not 'the form.' I take leave to think that there were no creeds in the apostolic time, and that the church would probably have had a firmer grasp of God's truth if there had never been any. At all events the idea of a cast-iron creed, into which the whole magnificence of the Christian faith is crushed, is by no means Paul's idea in the word here."
>
> —Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions, in loco.*

(7) Departure from the phraseology of the New Testament for theological terms and phrases has always been a prolific source of confusion. The only message that will change the heart, heal the conscience and save the soul is the New Testament in its purity and simplicity. Christians should speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.

(8) This text should be an unfailing source of strength to every Christian, and particularly so to every minister of the gospel. It admonishes one to exalt principle above policy, duty above inclination, and the truth of God above the speculations of men, 1 Cor. 3:21.

Argument: 1. *The sin of the Christian world has always been the tendency to undervalue the word of God.* The Bible exalts the word of God to a position of supreme importance in creation and redemption. It teaches:

(1) *That the universe was created by the word of God.* The expression, "And God *said*," is found nine times in the first chapter of Genesis; and in each case whatever God *said*, came to pass. Cf. Psa. 33:6, 148:5, Heb. 11:3, John 1:1-3, Col. 1:16-17. The Bible does not teach creation *out of nothing*. It teaches creation, without the use of pre-existing materials, by means of the Word-power of God. The physical universe, therefore, is but the externalization of the word of God, and the word of God is the declaration of the will of God. Nor is this unscientific. Science tells us that within man there is a *subjective* consciousness, governed by *suggestion;* and an *objective* consciousness governed by *reason*. The subjective consciousness is limitless, we are told, in its powers and capabilities. For instance, in a dream, one may go to London and back in a second; or experience the events of a lifetime in a few minutes. The subjective consciousness is not limited by any conceptions of time or space. The objective consciousness is the avenue through which the subjective entity relates itself to the outside world. Speaking in metaphysical terms, the subjective consciousness may be said to correspond to the Bible term, *spirit;* and the objective consciousness may reasonably be said to be the *mind*. Now the only medium through which the will of a personality may be declared is through *words*, whether in words voiced by the subjective consciousness by *suggestion*, or words voiced by the objective consciousness in *speech*. The Bible tells us that God,

as to nature, is Spirit, John 4:24. Christ, the Son of God, bears the same relation to the Father as the *mind* of man bears to the *spirit* of man; in other words, He is the medium through whom the will of God has been made known; in which respect John refers to Him as the Word, John 1:1-3, 14. It is a known fact that mind *partially* controls the human body; if this be true, may it not also be true that the subjective consciousness, or *spirit*, *absolutely* controls the human body? Dr. Hudson, in his *Laws of Psychic Phenomena*, advances the theory that a thought of sufficient intensity has inherent power to externalize itself in substantial form; that "the power exists in mankind to create phantoms, to project visions which may become visible to others, objectively or subjectively." If this be true, then "thoughts are things." Thus the latest psychical research confirms the Scripture truth that the physical universe is but the materialization of God's thought, as expressed by His Word, and revealed by His Spirit, Gen. 1:1-3. Hence, in both creation and redemption, it may be said that the Father was the *originating* Cause, the Son the *mediating* Cause, and the Spirit the *realizing* Cause.

(2) *That the universe is sustained in its various processes by the word of God.* We speak quite glibly in these days of "advanced thinking" about "natural laws." But what is a law? Laws pertain to *methods*, or *effects*, not to *causes*. Bowne says, *Review of Herbert Spencer*, pp. 231-247, "Law is method, not cause. A man can not offer the very fact to be explained, as its sufficient explanation." Says Joseph Cook: "Natural law without God behind it is no more than a glove without a hand in it, and all that is done by the gloved hand in nature is

done by the hand and not by the glove.....A book is not written *by* the laws of spelling and grammar, but *according to* those laws. So the book of the universe is not written *by* the laws of heat, electricity, gravitation.....but *according to* those laws." The Bible tells us that the power which lies back of all processes of nature is the word of God, Psa. 148:6, Heb. 1:3, 2 Pet. 3:5-7. The word of God not only created the universe, but also sustains it in its operations.

(3) *That the miracles of the Old Testament were formed by the same Word power.* Dr. A. H. Strong defines a miracle as "an event palpable to the senses, produced for a religious purpose by the immediate agency of God; an event, therefore, which, though not contravening any law of nature, the laws of nature, if fully known, would not, without this agency of God, be competent to explain." (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. I., p. 117). The will of God is the constitution of the physical universe, and the Word is the agency by which the divine Will is made known to both nature and men. Since the Word is the power by which the universe was created, and the power by which it is sustained, it follows that the Word must be the means used to temporarily supersede natural forces in the performance of a miracle. It requires the word of God entering into an event, or the dramatic use of some material object appointed to serve as an emblem of the Word, to produce a miracle. (a) *The rod of Moses* was an emblem of God's word. When Moses lifted his arm and smote the waters of the Nile, they turned into blood, Exo. 7:20. Moses performed wonderful miracles by the dramatic use of his rod. (b) "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes," Num. 20:7-13. Because Moses disobeyed this command

and smote the rock instead of speaking to it, and thus failed to exalt the Word in the eyes of Israel, he was not permitted to enter the promised land. (c) Joshua and the heavenly bodies, Josh. 10:12-14. It was the word of God which Joshua declared on this occasion, through the Spirit within him; and it was sufficient to arrest the movements of the heavenly bodies.

(4) *That Jesus performed miracles by means of the same Word-power.* Jesus was the embodiment of the Word in human flesh, John 1:1-3, 14. He is the Word of God *inwardly* in the sense that He has existed from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18, 17:5. The relationship between the Son and the Father is similar to that which exists between *mind* and *spirit.* As there is nothing so close to a man as his own thought, so there is no one so close to the Father as His own Son; and as man's spirit makes known its desires through the mind and by means of words, so the Father has revealed Himself in and through the Son. The Son is "the very image" of the Father, Heb. 1:3. Therefore, Jesus is also the Word of God *outwardly* in the sense that He came to give the world a perfect revelation of the Father, John 14:6-11. It follows that, since Jesus during the three years He was upon earth was the Word of God in human flesh, all nature was subject to His commands. The gospel narratives reveal the fact that when Jesus uttered the Word, all nature obeyed Him. This was the means He used in performing miracles: He spoke the Word and the miracle was performed. (a) Feeding the multitudes, Matt. 14:19. (b) Stilling the tempest, Matt. 8:26, Mark 4:39. (c) Healing the sick, Matt.

8:3; 8:8; John 4:50. (d) Casting out demons, Matt. 8:32; Mark 1:25. (e) Raising the dead, Luke 7:14; John 11:43.

(5) *That, when Jesus returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit, at His coming on the day of Pentecost, conferred this same Word-power upon the apostles.* Note (a) the promises of Jesus to the Twelve, John 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:13-14, 20:22-23; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:3, 8. (b) The descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Word-power of God was conferred upon the apostles, on this occasion, through Holy Spirit baptism, Acts 2:1-4. (c) Peter's sermon, and its effect upon the multitude, Acts 2:14-37. (d) The Spirit vested this Word-power in the apostles for the purpose of qualifying them to be authoritative executors of the will of Christ, 1 Cor. 2:1-4, 10-13; 14:37. Paul received this power by special revelation, Gal. 1:12.

(6) *That the apostles performed miracles by means of the same Word-power.* (a) The healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Acts 3:6. (b) The healing of Aeneas at Lydda, Acts 9:34. (c) The raising of Tabitha, at Joppa, Acts 9:40. (d) The judgment upon Elymas, Acts 13:9-11.

(7) *This Word-power, embodied in the gospel message, has been handed down to future ages in the New Testament.* (a) The law of the Lord converts the soul, Psa. 19:7. (b) The word of the Lord to go forth from Jerusalem, Isa. 2:3, Mic. 4:2, Luke 24:47. (c) The gospel is not *a* power, nor *one of the* powers, but *the* power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16. (d) The Word written or spoken makes believers, John 2:22, 6:63, 17:20, 20:30-31; Acts 15:7, 17:11-12; Rom. 10:17. (e) All conversions of the New Testament resulted from the preaching of the

Word. The three thousand, Acts 2:14-37. The Samaritans, Acts 8:5-12. The Ethiopian officer, Acts 8:30-35. Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:6, 22:10. Cornelius, Acts 11:14, 10:34-43. Lydia, Acts 16:14-15. The Philippian jailor, Acts 16:32. The Corinthians, Acts 18:8. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:21. (f) We have this Word-power in *stereotyped* form in the New Testament Scriptures, 1 Cor. 2:12-13, 1 Thess. 2:13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:3-4. (g) The proclamation of the word of God has been entrusted, not to *inspired* men, because inspiration ended with the apostles; nor to *illumined* men, because the Word, having been revealed by the Spirit, interprets itself if allowed to do so; nor especially to *cultured* or *eloquent* men; but to *faithful* men, 1 Tim. 6:20-21, 2 Tim. 2:2, 4:1-5. (h) The measure of individual discipleship, in the sight of God, is personal loyalty to the Word in precept and in life, Col. 3:16, John 15:7-10, 14:23-24; Luke 1:6; 1 John 2:3-4, 3:24; 2 John 6, etc. Christians are living epistles of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:3-4. (i) To the church, with her evangelists, elders and deacons, has been committed the sacred duty of safeguarding the Word, and of transmitting it to future generations in its original purity, 1 Tim. 3:15.

2. *The Restoration movement stands for strict allegiance to the Bible as God's authoritative revelation to man; and for allegiance to the New Testament in particular as an all-sufficient guide in Christian faith and practice.* The plea of the churches of Christ comprises the following matters of doctrine:

(1) *Proper division of the Word into its covenants and dispensations.* The old covenant, or testament, was made with the seed of Abraham, through the mediatorship of Moses, Gen. 17:1-14, 22:15-18, Deut. 5:2-22,

Neh. 9:13-15, John 1:17, Gal. 3:19. The entire old testament, with its priesthood, laws and ceremonials was abrogated at the death of Christ. Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 6:14, 7:4; Gal. 3:24-25; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:13-17; 2 Cor. 3:3-14; Heb. 8:6-13. The provisions of the new covenant are the for the whole world, and Christ is the Mediator thereof, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:24. The new institution was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost, A. D. 30, when the Holy Spirit descended and the gospel was preached for the first time in its fullness, Acts 2. The present dispensation is that of the Holy Spirit, John 14:16-17, who is, and will be, the personal agent of the Godhead in the church, until Jesus comes again, Eph. 2:22. If you want to know what Judaism is, read the Old Testament; if you want to know what Christianity is, read the New Testament. Every Christian should know how to rightly divide the "word of truth," 2 Tim. 2:15.

(2) *The recognition by all Christians of the absolute and exclusive authority of Jesus Christ over His church,* Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18, Phil. 2:9-11. The restoration of the authority of Christ would: (a) destroy Catholicism, with its popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and ecumenical councils, its multiplicity of traditions, rites and ceremonies, at a single blow; (b) sweep away the human names, human creeds, human assemblies and human ceremonials of Protestantism; (c) destroy scholasticism and speculative theology; (d) bring about the unity of all Christians on the basis of the New Testament; and (e) restore the churches of Christ in their original simplicity and purity of faith and worship, Rom. 16:16.

(3) *Christian unity on the basis of the New Testament*, John 17:20-21, Eph. 4:4-6.

(4) *The recognition of the Bible as an authoritative revelation from God; and of the New Testament as a sufficient book of discipline for all churches of Christ*, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

(5) *The abandonment of speculative theology.* It is quite evident that present-day confusion and strife in the Christian world has been brought about largely by theological hair-splitting and creed-making. The pioneers of the Restoration movement studiously avoided this tendency. They drew the line carefully between matters of *faith* and matters of *opinion*. While they adhered religiously to the seven essentials, Eph. 4:4-6, yet they granted to one another great liberty of opinion in non-essentials, just to the extent that such opinions did not call in question the veracity of the Scriptures nor the deity of Jesus. Matters of *faith*, they held to be *public* property; matters of *opinion*, they declared, are *private* property and should not be exploited. The message of the church and her ministry, they said, is the gospel, with its facts, commands and promises. Such matters as for instance, the origin of evil; theories of decrees, election, foreknowledge and foreordination; the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; the relative standing of the human and divine in the earthly constitution of our Lord; the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, etc.; are questions which have their place in Christian faith and doctrine, but which should not be exploited to the neglect of the gospel nor imposed upon Christians as tests of fellowship. In matters of faith, they said, the churches

are obligated to acquiesce without question; in matters of opinion, they should be guided by the law of *expediency.*

(6) *The use of a strictly Scriptural phraseology*, or, "calling Bible things by Bible names."

Witness the great slogans: "Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament." "Rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as authority, or as having any place in the church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the divine Word alone as our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the Word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Nothing ought to be inculcated as articles of faith, nor required as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught in the word of God.....either in expressed terms, or by approved precedent." "When the Scriptures speak, we speak; when the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." "The restoration of primitive Christianity, its laws, its ordinances and its fruits."

3. *It is becoming apparent, however, that certain evil tendencies are beginning to manifest themselves within the free churches of Christ, contrary to the admonition of our text and to the Scriptural plea and position of the Restoration movement*, as, for example:

(1) *A tendency in the direction of theological hair-splitting.* Examples: (a) The tendency to discriminate between the "form" and "spirit" of Christian baptism.

The Bible makes no such distinction. True, in Rom. 6:17, the apostle refers to baptism as a "form of teaching." However, the Greek word translated "form" in the *Revised Version* means literally, "mould," "pattern" or "picture." The teaching referred to is the gospel with its three facts—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Baptism is said to be a mould, or picture, of these facts. One can see at a glance that immersion is the only act which can possibly meet these pictorial requirements. See Rom. 6:3-5. We can not *literally* be united with Christ in death, because He died almost two thousand years ago; but we can be united with Him (i. e., married to Him) in the *likeness*, or *picture*, of His death, and we can be raised with Him in a picture of His resurrection. Thus while the act itself is pictorial in a sense, the marriage is literal. Baptism is the ceremony in which the believing penitent is married to Jesus. Again, we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, 1 John 1:7 Now we can not come under His blood literally—the blood shed on Calvary. But, as His blood flowed in His death, we are said to come under His blood when we become united with Him in the likeness of His death. In other words, God meets the penitent believer in the grave of water with the pardon of his sins, and thus baptism is *for* the remission of sins, Acts 2:38. Baptism is an act of faith; it is an act of obedience *from the heart*, Rom. 6:17. So far as I know it has never been taught by any Christian preacher that the mere physical act of immersion is equivalent to baptism; on the contrary, the physical act is accompanied by, and is the outward expression of, the spiritual surrender of the life to the will of Christ.

"View of baptism, as a mere external and bodily act, exert a very injurious influence on the understanding and practice of men.....We have been taught to regard immersion in water, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as an act of the whole man—body, soul and spirit. The soul of the intelligent subject is as fully immersed into the Lord Jesus, as his body is immersed in the water. His soul rises with the Lord Jesus, as his body rises out of the water; and into one Spirit with all the family of God he is immersed." —Alexander Campbell, *Christian System*, p. 263.

J. H. Garrison, in *The Christian Evangelist*, Oct. 20, 1921, says:

"Jesus Himself submitted to baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, in the river Jordan, in order, as He declared 'to fulfill all righteousness.' There was no question about 'the form of baptism' in those days. So far as I know there has never been any difference of opinion among scholars as to how Christ was baptized, or as to what was the practice of the apostles in administering that ordinance. The difference has been about the necessity or advisability of adhering to this 'form of baptism.' The Roman Catholic Church claims the right to change 'the form of baptism.' Protestants in so far as they have accepted this changed 'form,' justify themselves in the fact that the 'spirit' of any religious act is vastly more important than 'the mere form'—a truth which we are all free to admit; but when Jesus has wedded the two, isn't it a dangerous liberty we take to separate them?"

Let us, then, quit quibbling about "the form" and "the spirit," as related to baptism, and teach and practise it just as it is in the New Testament—as a sacred, spiritual, heart act which pictures the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. (b) The same argument applies to the tendency to make a distinction between so-called "formal" and "vital" Christianity. The Bible makes no such distinction, nor is there any authority to be found anywhere for such a distinction. With Christ and the apostles it was Christianity or

nothing; and Christianity, according to New Testament teaching, is measured in terms of loving obedience to the will of Christ, John 15:7-10; 1 John 2:4-5, 5:2-3; John 14:23. The same spirit that led Cain to disobey the positive law of sacrifice also led him to murder his brother in an act of jealous rage. I doubt very much if there is such a thing as "nominal Christianity" or mere "formal Christianity." All the commands of Christ are *vital*, and obedience to them, in the spirit of faith, hope and love, is *Christianity*.

(2) *A tendency towards the development of unscriptural names and phrases.* (a) I have even heard talk recently about "modes" of baptism. "Mode" means *manner*, and manner is indicated by the verb used; change the manner, and a different verb is required. I do not know of a verb in the English language that stands for three different actions. Baptism is a specific act, and the act is baptism. (b) I have recently heard some talk of a "Disciples' Church." But the church does not belong to the saints, nor to the brethren, nor to the friends, nor to the disciples. Therefore it can not be Scripturally said to be the "Saints' Church," nor the "Brethren Church," nor the "Friends' Church." nor the "Disciples' Church." The church belongs to Christ, Acts 20:28; therefore it should be known as the church of Christ. I do not belong to any "Disciples' Church;" in fact I do not even know of the existence of such an institution. I belong to the church of Jesus Christ and have no desire to belong to any other, and I pray that the same may be said of all who hear this sermon. (c) Again, I have heard some talk of late about the "clergy" and the "laity." The Bible makes no such distinction; neither should the churches of Christ.

This is a distinction most severely condemned in the writings of the pioneers. May the Lord deliver us from a "clergy!" (d) How important it is that we hold fast the pattern of sound words! I trust that the free churches of Christ, and their ministers, evangelists and pastors, may soon be delivered from this restlessness, this uncertainty of thought and expression, this wandering in circles, which has been entirely too prevalent in the past few years.

Conclusion: (1) The history of Christianity shows that much of our present-day confusion has been engendered by a departure from the pattern of sound words, a fact which the apostle foresaw quite clearly. (a) When the "inner consciousness" or *reason* is made the standard of authority in spiritual matters, the result is *rationalism*. (b) When *feeling* is made the standard of authority, the result is *mysticism*. (c) When *ecumenical interpretations* are made the standard, the result is *traditionalism*. (d) When the" sincere milk of the Word" is strained through a human intellect, no matter how scholarly it may be, the result is *systematic theology*, which usually terminates in creedal statements and sectarianism. The moment one departs from the Bible as one's religious guide-book, to depend upon reason, emotion, conscience, church decrees or speculative theology, one has begun to apostatize from the true faith.

(2) I have never been able to find but one person in the Bible who considered the word of God "a dead letter." This was the man who, in Hades, lifted up his eyes in torment, Luke 16:19-31; and he was severely rebuked for his presumptuousness. The "righteousness which is of faith" does not ask that Christ come down from heaven, or that someone arise from the dead, in

order to show one the way to heaven; on the contrary, this, the true righteousness, depends upon and follows the guidance of the word of God, Rom. 10:6-10.

(3) The word of God can not be resisted by material things; when the divine Word is spoken, all nature obeys. Verily, the command of God will move mountains, Matt. 17:20. This divine Word, however, may be *resisted* by man, 2 Tim. 3:8. The saddest words that fell from the lips of Jesus were, "Ye would not," John 5:40, Matt. 23:37. It may be *perverted* by man, Gal. 1:7. It may be *neglected* by man, Heb. 2:3. Or, it may be *accepted, believed and obeyed* by man to his salvation and everlasting glory. May God grant that, among those present at this time, there are some with good and honest hearts, in whom the Word may find ready reception and quick obedience, Luke 8:15.

XXIII

WHY I AM NOT A "CAMPBELLITE"

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3.

Text: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus....."—Col. 3:17.

For such a sermon as this one can find numerous texts which are appropriate, as, for example, 1 Cor. 3:4, 1 Cor. 3:11, and especially Col. 3:17.

On March 27, 1923, there appeared in the Kansas City, Mo., *Star*, a full-page article of an historical nature under the caption, "When the 'Campbellites' First Came to Missouri." The writer was kind enough to enclose the word "Campbellite" in quotation marks. Certain paragraphs of the article read as follows:

> "About the time Missouri was admitted to the Union there came to the northeast counties two preachers from Kentucky, Thomas McBride and Samuel Rogers. They traveled from settlement to settlement, preaching. Distances between settlements being great, they carried their camp outfits and slept by the wayside. They pleaded for a more intelligent understanding of the Scriptures. 'Back to the Book' and 'Thus saith the Lord' were shibboleths in their sermons. They accepted the Bible as the Word of God without any interpretation. 'Where the Bible speaks, we speak, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent,' a phrase coined by the elder Thomas Campbell, was used liberally in all public presentations of what was familiarly termed their 'plea.' The burden of their messages was for the union of the divided church. They preached against the sin of evangelical divisions. They

refused infant baptism as unscriptural, declared ecclesiastical machinery undemocratic, observed the Lord's Supper every Sunday, and baptized penitent believers by immersion as the only true baptism.

"These men were followers of one Barton W. Stone, a Kentucky preacher with a large following, an associate of Alexander Campbell, whose separate movements were then in process of amalgamation. Both Stone and Campbell preached the same doctrine, but Campbell, being the aggressor easily took the lead; hence the converts came to be known as 'Campbellites,' though that appellation has always been distasteful to their leaders."

After commenting upon the work of the pioneer preachers of this movement in Missouri, the writer describes Alexander Campbell's first visit to the state. He says:

"In 1845, Alexander Campbell himself made his first appearance in Missouri at the annual meeting at Columbia. He 'delighted listening thousands,' according to the minutes. Mr. Campbell was an eloquent speaker, holding his audiences spell-bound by the hour. Born in County Antrim, Ireland, and educated at Glasgow University, in Scotland, Mr. Campbell expected to be a Presbyterian preacher, to which church he then belonged. He was well-grounded in the tenets of the Christian religion, being a brilliant exponent of the plea he so ardently advocated. In his travels he invariably preached that divisions between Christians was sinful. He opened an avenue to Christian union through the chapters of the New Testament. The reformation he proposed meant the abandonment of all human systems, and the adoption of a scriptural form as a true basis for uniting the divided and warring sects. Each church was to be regarded as an independent organization, having its own internal government, bishops (elders) and deacons, yet not to be so absolutely independent of other churches as not to be bound to them by fraternal relations. He considered 'lay preaching' as authorized and denied the distinction between 'clergy' and 'laity' as Scriptural. Infant baptism was without Scriptural authority, and therefore not to be practised.

> "Mr. Campbell was especially severe upon the clergy, failing to make allowances for the prevalence of ignorance or lack of education. Many of the preachers of his time had never seen a college and even those having some contact with an academy had seen none of the world. Having no contact with great movements of the age, most preachers were incapable of appreciating Mr. Campbell's wide and comprehensive view of the gospel, and his broad religious culture. Woe be unto the preacher who met him in debate!"

I have quoted from this retrospect at length to give you a brief synopsis, from the viewpoint of a newspaper man, of what Alexander Campbell advocated and preached. The most pertinent statement of the article is that which declares that the converts made by these men "came to be known as 'Campbellites,' though that appellation has always been distasteful to their leaders."

In the days of the Reformation, those who held the views championed by Martin Luther were dubbed "Lutherans" by their enemies. In the early days of the Restoration movement, those who stood for a return to the "ancient order of things" were derisively called "Campbellites." In the course of time, however, the associates of Luther finally accepted the name "Lutheran," and crystallized into a denomination under that name; while those who were associated with Campbell flatly rejected the name "Campbellite," and repudiated it. The name is scarcely heard to-day except in those isolated communities where preachers still wear whiskers and celluloid collars.

I propose to enumerate several reasons, in this sermon, why I reject the name "Campbellite." These reasons are:

1. *Because I am not a disciple of Alexander Campbell.* Though Alexander Campbell wrote voluminously during

his lifetime, I, myself, have read very little of his writings. I have read as extensively from the works of Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others, as I had read from those of Mr. Campbell. I am not a "Campbellite," for the simple reason that I am not a follower of Mr. Campbell —I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *Because I was not baptized in the name of Alexander Campbell. Name* implies *authority.* The great commission requires that penitent believers be baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matt. 28:19. The apostles baptized penitent believers in the name of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:38, 10:48, etc. Jesus has *all authority* in the kingdom of heaven, therefore we should be baptized in His name, Matt. 28:18. What would you think if I were to baptize in the name of Martin Luther, or of John Wesley, or of John Calvin, or of Alexander Campbell? You would say at once that such an act would not be *Christian* baptism—that it would be a mockery. Then why not *wear* the name in which you were baptized, 1 Cor. 1:13-15?

3. *Because Alexander Campbell did not die for my sins.* See 1 Cor. 1:13-14. Campbell was not crucified for me. The first fact of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. 15:3. Therefore we should wear His name and no other.

4. *Because there is no salvation in the name of Campbell,* 1 Cor. 3:4-9. Who are Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Knox, Campbell, etc., but humble ministers of the divine Word by and through whom men were led to believe in Christ as their Savior? Peter states expressly that there is salvation in the name of Christ only, Acts

4:11-12. Therefore His name should be worn exclusively by His people.

5. *Because I reject all human names as religious designations.* Human names are condemned by the apostle Paul as divisive and evidences of carnality, 1 Cor. 3:4, Rom. 8:6-7. Human names are the greatest walls of division between God's people at the present time. *Martin Luther* says: "Do not call yourselves Lutherans, but call yourselves Christians." *John Wesley* says: "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms were forgot." *Dr. Albert Barnes* says: "Should not, and will not, all these divisions be merged into the high and holy name, 'Christian?' " *Henry Ward Beecher* once said, at the communion table: "Let me speak the language of heaven and call you simply 'Christians.' " Whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, Paul says, should be done in this name that is above every name, Col. 3:17, Phil. 2:9-11.

6. *Because Mr. Campbell himself would not want me to wear his name.* Mr. Campbell would literally turn in his grave were he to know of the existence of a "Campbellite Church." He repeatedly warned against the name. He says: "Abandon all party names and take the name 'Christian.' "

7. *Because I preach that which I preach for the simple reason that it is found in the New Testament, and not because it may be found in the writings of Alexander Campbell.* (1) Because I stand for the reunion of Christendom on the basis of the New Testament does not make me a "Campbellite." Jesus prayed for this very thing, Himself, John 17:20-21, also verse 17. The apostles taught it, 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11; Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 4:3-6. Mr. Campbell advocated no new doctrine in

preaching Christian unity on the basis of the apostles' doctrine. This message is co-existent with the work of Jesus and His apostles and early evangelists. Mr. Campbell merely sought to call the attention of all disciples of Christ to this plea and prayer for unity, which had for so many centuries been overlooked. (2) Because I believe that the doctrines and commandments of men should be rejected does not make me a "Campbellite." Jesus and the apostles taught the same things, Matt. 15:8-9; Mark 7:7-8; Col. 2:20-23; Col. 2:8; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; Tit. 1:13-14. (3) Because I teach that faith, repentance, confession and baptism are conditions of membership in the church of Christ does not make me a "Campbellite." These scriptural terms of pardon were laid down by Jesus and the apostles. See Matt. 10:32-33; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-40, and 16:30-34; Rom. 6:3-5; Rom. 10:9-10; Gal. 3:26-28, etc. (4) Because I accept Christ as my creed, and the New Testament as my book of discipline, and wear only the name of Christ as my religious designation, does not make me a "Campbellite." The primitive churches and their members did the same things, Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9; John 20:30-31; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Acts 2:42, 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16.

8. *Because there is no such institution in existence as a "Campbellite Church."* I think I hear someone saying, "Did not Mr. Campbell establish what is known to-day as the 'Christian Church?'" I reply most emphatically that he did not; moreover, that there is no such institution as the "Christian Church" in any sectarian or denominational sense. As in New Testament times, there are local congregations known as churches of Christ, Rom. 16:16, popularly called "Christian

Churches," but there is no such institution as the "Christian Church" in existence, in a denominational sense. The New Testament teaches that all who are Christians are *in Christ*, Gal. 3:27, 6:15; Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; and those who are *in Christ* are in the *church of Christ*, which is His body, Eph. 1:23, 4:4. All Christians are in the church of Christ; they may be worshipping under human names, but they are in the church of Christ if they have complied with the laws of adoption, Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:10, Gal. 3:27.. They sin when they cause division among disciples of Christ by the imposition of human names, creeds and practices, 1 Cor. 3:1-4. Mr. Campbell did not establish any church; on the contrary, he and his associates advocated a *restoration* of the New Testament idea of the local church, each congregation being an independent unit under the authority of the New Testament, known as a church of Christ and its members known as Christians. I do not belong to a "Campbellite Church" because there is no such institution. I belong to the church of Jesus Christ of which He is the Head and the Foundation, and His last will and testament is the only book of discipline.

9. *Because I am a Christian.* Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16. Refer to text, Col. 3:17. Dr. A. J. Gordon says, "It was not by accident or as a term of derision that the first believers received their name, but the disciples were divinely called Christians first at Antioch." (*Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 206). This is the name which is above every name, Phil. 2:9. If we wear the name worthily here, we shall wear it eternally hereafter, Rev. 22:4.

I am proud of this divine name; yet it fills me with humility. I pray that we may all wear the name worthily; in *practice*, as well as in *profession;* in all meekness and lowliness of heart. I pray that we may *adorn* both the name and the doctrine of God our Savior, Tit. 2:10.

XXIV

POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT POSITION

Scripture Reading: Acts 28:17-31..

Text: "But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is everywhere spoken against."—Acts 28:22.

New Testament Christianity has always been misunderstood. Jesus Himself was frequently misunderstood, Matt. 26:61, even by His own disciples, Luke. 24:25-26, John 20:9, 24-25. The apostles were likewise misunderstood, Rom. 3:8. The early church was "everywhere spoken against," Acts 28:22. Truth has always been misunderstood and misrepresented. Some of these misunderstandings have been honest; some have been wilful and premeditated, Acts 28:26-27, 2 Pet. 3:5.

The Restoration movement originated in the early part of the nineteenth century in the work of Barton W. Stone and of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. These men did not seek to establish a new denomination; nor were they *reformers*. Their objective was to restore the doctrine, laws and fruits of New Testament Christianity, in which each local congregation of Christians was an independent and self-governing unit, under the law of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. They appealed to all disciples of Christ to forsake denominationalism and to unite on the basis of divine truth, that

the prayer of our Lord, John 17:20-21, might be answered. This plea has been grossly misunderstood and misrepresented. Much of this misunderstanding has arisen out of prejudice. Let us look at some of the objections commonly offered to the teaching and practice of those congregations known as churches of Christ, commonly called "Christian Churches."

1. *Objection Number One:* "You do not believe the Bible. You reject the Old Testament." *Answer:* We believe the Bible is inspired from Genesis to Revelation, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:21. The Bible is divided into two grand divisions—the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is known variously as "the law," "the letter," "the ministration of death," "the old covenant," etc.; the New Testament is known as "the gospel," "the Spirit," "the ministration of life," "the new covenant," etc., Rom. 6:14, 7:4; John 1:17; Gal. 3:24-25; 2 Cor. 3:3-14, Heb. 8:6-13, etc. The law of Moses was abrogated when Jesus died on the cross, Col. 2:13-17. One who is familiar with law knows that when a man makes two wills, the last will supersedes and abrogates the preceding will; so the last will and testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ abrogates the first. Some say, "We believe the whole Bible is binding upon us now." Why, then, do they not keep the Passover, Exo. 12:1-20; the seventh-day Sabbath, Deut. 5:12-15; sacrifices of blood, Lev. 23:19-20; circumcision of the flesh, Gen. 17:10-14; the Old Testament feasts, Exo. 23:14-15; the burning of incense, the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle services, and all other ceremonials and laws of the Old Testament? Why keep *any*, and not keep *all*, of them? It is universally admitted that the Old Testament was for the fleshly seed of Abraham,

Gen. 17:2-7. It was given through the mediatorship of Moses, John 1:17. The New Testament, given through the mediatorship of Jesus, is for the whole world, Heb. 8:6, Matt. 28:19. *While the entire Bible is inspired, only the New Testament is binding upon Christians.* If you want to know what Judaism is, read the Old Testament; if you want to know what Christianity is, read the New. These fundamental truths of "rightly dividing the Word" are coming to be pretty generally recognized by the whole Christian world.

2. *Objection Number Two:* "You do not believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion." *Answer:* We believe that the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost to abide with the church forever, as Jesus had promised, John 14:16-17; that the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgment, John 16:7-12. Far be it from us to attempt to place limitations upon the *power* of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 12:31-32. This is not a question of *power*, but of *method.* The Holy Spirit is not the cause of confusion; the Holy Spirit is orderly in His methods and operations. He does not inspire one man to "preach up" an "ism," (such as Methodism, Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, Catholicism, etc.) and another to "preach it down." There is no Scripture evidence that the Holy Spirit ever operated upon the heart of an alien in any other way than through *the written or spoken Word.* In the conversion of the Ethiopian, the Spirit *sent the* preacher to the sinner, instead of going to the sinner directly, Acts 8:29. The same is true in the case of Peter and Cornelius, Acts 10:19-20. The gospel is *the* power of God unto salvation, not simply *a* power, nor *one of the* powers, Rom. 1:16. It is the power of God, because

the Spirit is in it. The gospel is the sword of the Spirit, not because the Spirit *wields* it, but because the Spirit has *revealed* it, Eph. 6:17. (Here the Ephesian Christians are exhorted to wield this spiritual sword.) If the Holy Spirit operates independent of the Word in the conversion of the sinner, why has not the entire heathen world been converted? The Spirit of God is in the Word of God, John 6:63, to such an extent that what is done by the one is said to be done by the other; and there is no Scripture evidence that the Spirit operates in the conversion of a sinner in any other way than through the Word of God, 1 Cor. 1:21.

3. *Objection Number Three:* "You do not properly emphasize repentance in the conversion of the sinner." *Answer:* We try to give the same importance to repentance as did Jesus and the apostles, Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 17:30. Sorrow for sin, however, is not repentance, but the *cause* of repentance, 2 Cor. 7:10. Repentance is actual *turning from sin*, Matt. 12:41, Jonah 3:8, Acts 26:18, and is absolutely essential to conversion.

4. *Objection Number Four:* "You don't believe in heartfelt religion." *Answer:* We surely do. Change of heart is also necessary to conversion. Change of heart is not some mysterious emotion, but an intelligent process that goes along with hearing, understanding, believing and obeying the gospel message, 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:14; Acts 8:30, 31, 35; Rom. 6:17; Acts 28 26-27. Faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. A member of a church of Christ will be received into practically every denominational body *by letter*. Why so if the genuineness of our conversion is doubted?

5. *Objection Number Five:* "You place too much emphasis on baptism." *Answer:* We place baptism

where Jesus put it in the great commission—between belief and salvation, Mark 16:16; right where Peter put it in stating the terms of pardon—between repentance and remission of sins, Acts 2:38. Baptism is an essential part of the great commission, Matt. 28:19. Why should it be ignored? That baptism is considered an essential is proved by the fact that one can not get into any church in Christendom, with the exception of the Friends' Church, without submitting to an ordinance in which water is used, which that church calls baptism. The New Testament teaches that faith, repentance, confession and baptism are all essential to remission of sins, Acts 2:38, 16:31; Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10; Rom 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27. Perhaps if other ministers were true to the great commission in its entirety, and would leave baptism where Jesus and the apostles put it, it would not appear that we emphasize it too much.

6. *Objection Number Six:* "You teach water salvation." *Answer:* A thousand times, No! The efficacy of baptism is not in the *water*, but in the manifestation of faith and obedience which it implies, Rom. 6:17. We do not sprinkle infants, which is evidence that we do not teach water salvation. If there is any efficacy in infant sprinkling, it must be in the *water*. One thing is sure—it can not be in the condition of the child's heart, because the child does not even know what is taking place. Baptism is said to be the manifestation of an obedient and trustful conscience, 1 Pet. 3:21, which it could not be in infant sprinkling, as the child does not exercise any conscience in the matter. Because I do not teach water salvation, I do not sprinkle infants. The New Testament authorizes me to baptize only those who

are old enough to believe and repent, Acts 2:38, 16:31, 33; Mark 16:16, etc.

7. *Objection Number Seven:* "You are too narrow in that you practise strict immersion." *Answer:* I practise immersion exclusively for three reasons: (1) The voice of Scripture and history unanimously agree that immersion was New Testament baptism. The baptism of the eunuch proves this too conclusively for argument, Acts 8:36-39. This case of baptism is so clear that a child can understand it. (2) One who has been immersed will be accepted as baptized by any church in Christendom, which proves the universality of immersion. This being the one action which all admit to be baptism, it follows that immersion is the only baptism on which the church will ever be united. We will never have a *united* church on a *divided* baptism, but we can have a united church on what all agree to be baptism. The argument is not concerning what baptism *is*, but concerning what baptism *is not.* (3) Baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the three facts of the gospel, 1 Cor. 15:1-4, Rom. 6:3-5. Immersion is the only action which can meet this pictorial requirement. I never hope to be any broader than the New Testament.

8. *Objection Number Eight:* "You are selfish in that you claim to be the only Christians." *Answer:* Wrong again. We do not claim to be the *only* Christians—we are just Christians *only.* "But that is too exclusive," you say, "why do you thus set yourselves apart from other Christians?" We do not set ourselves apart from other Christians; *they set themselves apart from us when they wear denominational names.* We wear only the Scriptural name, Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16. Human

names are divisive, and are forbidden by the Scriptures, 1 Cor. 1:12, 3:4-5.

Are you ready to meet us on the divine name, taking Christ as your only creed, and the Bible as your only guide in religious faith and practice? We offer you this divine platform now, that God's people may be one, and that the prayer of our Lord may be answered, John 17:20-21. In so doing, we do not ask you to come to us; on the contrary, we plead with you to do as we have done—to go back with us to New Testament ground. Come, while we sing.

XXV

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEUM*

Scripture Reading: Neh. 6:1-6.

Text: "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jersualem that we be no more a reproach." Neh. 2:17.

Introduction: (1) The Old Testament abounds in types, symbols, metaphors and allegories of events and institutions of the New. See 1 Cor. 10:11; Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5, 10:1. These things written in olden times are for our edification and growth as Christians, Rom. 15:4.

(2) The incidents of this sermon pertain to one of the periods in the later history of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is one of the historic and sacred cities of the world. To the Jew it has always been holy ground and the red blood of patriotism has ever surged through his veins at the mere mention of the name of Zion. There the magnificent Temple was located, rich with the traditions of many centuries. It was the city where God had made His dwelling; where He had recorded His holy Name; where He had established His ark of the covenant; where holy men of old, from Melchizedek to Ezra, had wrought marvelous achievements of faith; where the high priests of Israel had, for many long centuries, mediated between Jehovah and His people.

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*Many of the thoughts presented in this outline are taken from a sermon under the same caption by W. H. Book, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II., pp. 190-205.

Time has even failed to dull this reverence for the city of David; and at the present time the Jews are gathering back to it from all parts of the world, under the auspices of the Zionist movement, which contemplates the ultimate restoration of the ancient theocracy and the development of the city into the world's cultural, commercial and religious center.

(3) Jerusalem has had a checkered history. It is first mentioned in the sacred narrative as the home of the ancient priest, Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18. It attained its greatest splendor under Solomon, the son of David. After his death, however, and the subsequent division of the kingdom, it became the battle-ground of the nations which it has been from that day until the present. During the period of the decline of Judah, it lay midway between two powerful and rival nations: Babylonia on the east and Egypt on the west. With a succession of weak kings on the throne of Judah, it was inevitable that the city should become the prey of one barbarian conqueror after another; until finally, about 604 B. C., in the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, descended upon the rebellious Jews, laid siege to the city and captured it, and carried off to Babylon the defeated king and about 18,000 of his subjects. Jehoiachin, a lad of eight years, was placed upon the throne of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, but he reigned only three months and ten days. The machinations of the princes of Judah who sought an alliance with Egypt so aroused the ire of Nebuchadnezzar that he moved against the city a second time and captured it without a siege, and carried off to Babylon another detachment of approximately 10,000 Jews. Jehoiachin's successor was Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Zedekiah

was faithless to the oath which he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar, and the latter returned a third time and laid siege to the doomed city. This siege lasted for more than two and one-half years and was personally conducted by Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's hosts. The Babylonians finally triumphed, entered the city, burned it to the ground, destroyed the temple and leveled the walls, and carried into captivity the remainder of the Jews. Both Jerusalem and Judea were practically depopulated when Nebuzaradan's army returned to Babylon.

(4) The Babylonian Captivity was the midnight of ancient Jewish history. Memories of the departed grandeur of their nation so filled the hearts of the captive Jews with remorse that they wept, we are told, by the waters of Babylon. With the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, King of Persia, a new era was ushered in; in the first year of his reign, Cyrus issued a decree authorizing the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. In 556 B. C., a contingent of some 50,000 Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, returned to the stricken city, rebuilt the altar and laid the foundations of the second temple. The progress of the work was halted, however, because Zerubbabel and the high priest Jeshua, refused help from the Samaritans, and strife was engendered. Matters continued thus until Darius ascended the throne of Persia. He also was friendly to the Jews. With his assistance order was restored at Jerusalem and the temple was finally completed in 516 B. C. The walls, however, were still unrepaired.

(5) This brings us to the incidents related in the book of Nehemiah, an apparently unimportant book of the Old Testament canon. It has only thirteen chap-

ters, but it reveals the life story of a great patriot, statesman and builder, a man who was devoted to his God and his people. Nehemiah was comparatively a young man when he set out to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem; yet, in spite of delays, treachery, attempted compromise and persecution, he carried the enterprise through to complete success. He not only rebuilt the walls, but in collaboration with Ezra, the scribe, he restored the ancient laws, customs and forms of worship.

(6) It shall be my purpose to sketch as briefly as possible, in this sermon, the events narrated in the book of Nehemiah, and to draw therefrom certain analogies of the origin and progress of the Restoration movement; to outline the comparisons between the rebuilding of the walls of *literal* Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the walls of *spiritual* Jerusalem, i. e., the church of the living God, Gal. 4:26. I shall group these comparisons under four captions, as follows:

1. *Nehemiah's Vision.* (1) (a) In the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes (B. C. 445) grievous tidings from Jerusalem reached the royal winter residence at Shushan (Susa). The people of Judea were in affliction and reproach, the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down and the gates burnt, as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar. This news was brought by Hanani, and other Jews of Judea, to Nehemiah, who appears to have belonged to the tribe of Judah and who held the office of cup-bearer to Artaxerxes. Overwhelmed by these sad tidings, he fasted and prayed God to incline the king's heart to grant his desire to help his brethren in Jerusalem. At the end of four months an opportunity offered itself when the king observed his cup-bearer's sadness. Nehemiah explained its cause and obtained

leave of absence for a fixed time, with letters to the governors west of the Euphrates to aid him in his journey, and to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, to supply him with timber. (b) A little more than a century ago, spiritual Jerusalem was deeply afflicted. Many of her people had been swallowed up in the great apostasy which resulted in Roman Catholicism; the Word of God was buried beneath a mass of human creeds and confessions; human ceremonials and forms had been substituted for the ordinances of Christ; the inhabitants of spiritual Zion were divided into warring factions; and shame and reproach had come upon the whole church of God. To many professing Christians, the Bible was a "dead letter," and the gospel had ceased to be the power of God unto salvation. However, there was a remnant that was still true to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that sought to obey divine truth in its original purity and simplicity. Of this number, there were a few men who were deeply spiritual, who honored the Word of God and followed it to the best of their ability. They saw that the walls of Christian doctrine were down at certain places and that they would have to be builded again to their original level before God's people could be one in answer to the prayer of our Lord, John 17:20-21. So these men, Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, and other noble souls, set out to rebuild the walls around spiritual Zion.

(2) (a) Nehemiah did not start out to build a *new* wall, but to *restore* the original wall which had been broken down in certain places. It was not his purpose to labor on the walls at the points where they were up to the original level, but to rebuild at the places where they were down. (b) In like manner, Stone, Scott and the

Campbells, and their co-workers did not set out to organize a *new* church. History shows that they studiously avoided the very appearance of having created a *new* denomination, for the simple reason that they abhorred *all* denominationalism. On the contrary, their aim was to *restore* the church of the New Testament in its original simplicity and purity of faith, organization and worship. They did not set in motion any new sytem of doctrine; but sought to restore the doctrine of Christ as revealed by the apostles and embodied in the New Testament. They appealed to all disciples of Christ to discard human names, creeds and forms of worship, and to unite on the basis of the apostles' doctrine. They contended that nothing should be received into the faith and worship of the church that is not as old as the New Testament. Their great slogan was: "When the Scriptures speak, we speak; when the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

(3) (a) Nehemiah's inspiration was: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us." (b) The same inspiration moved the pioneers of the Restoration movement.

> "Their sunlight was the great truth—God wills that the work be done. The men who built those walls, and rebuilt those walls, were heartened by the conviction that they were doing the work of Almighty God. And no man will ever succeed largely in any great undertaking who does not believe that he is called of God to do that thing; that God's business is his business; and that his business is God's business; and that he is moving along a road that has been made smooth by the Almighty God. All the great souls whose names shall be remembered have been men who were strong with the strength of the conviction that they were doing God's work."
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> —Combs, *The Call of the Mountains*, p. 46.

Who will deny that it was the will of God which impelled Martin Luther to deliver the Christian world from the

iron rule of the papacy? Or, that it was the will of God which moved John Calvin to reemphasize the doctrine of God's sovereignty? Or, that it was the will of God which urged John Wesley on to the divine task of bringing into the church a widespread spiritual reformation?

> "And, my brethren, if in this great spiritual work that has come to the disciples of Christ—and I am using that word in in the largest sweep of it—there is not the profound conviction that God wills that this work be done, we shall be powerless, when we should be men and women clothed with might. If this special communion with which you and I are indentified is to go forward, if the work of it is not to be done by men who believe that God wants it to be done—who believe that God wants them to do it—we shall not go fast, nor shall we go far."
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> —Combs, *Ibid*, pp. 46-47.

2. *Nehemiah's Work.* (1) (a) Nehemiah and his brethren rebuilt the walls of literal Jerusalem. (b) So the pioneers of the Restoration movement rebuilt the walls of spiritual Jerusalem. Under their preaching, for the first time since the apostolic era, men and women were told what to do to be saved in apostolic terms.

(2) The walls of Jerusalem were down only at certain points. It was at the *water gate* the attacks were usually made by Nehemiah's enemies. (b) The same thing has been true in rebuilding the walls of spiritual Zion. The pioneers found the walls down only at certain places. They were up to the level at the point of *faith;* no repairing needed to be done at that point. They were level at the point of *repentance;* no repairing was needed there. They were a little below the level at such points as the "all-sufficiency of the Scriptures," the personality and work of the Holy Spirit, "rightly

dividing the word of truth," etc., and considerable rebuilding was needed at these points. As all "evangelical" preachers emphasized the importance of faith, repentance, and many other essentials of Christianity, so the pioneers did not have to over-work at these points. But the wall of spiritual Zion was almost to the ground at the *water gate;* it was here that the greatest work of rebuilding had to be done. All denominations stressed baptism *in theory*, to such an extent that they would not grant church membership without what they called baptism; yet at the same time they minimized baptism in their preaching and denied that it was a prerequisite of remission of sins. (Note here that Jesus, though without sin, thought baptism of sufficient importance to require of Him a journey of more than seventy miles, from Nazareth to the Jordan, in order that He might be baptized by John; that Jesus included baptism in the great commission; that Peter, by authority of the Holy Spirit, made baptism essential to remission of sins, Acts 2:38; that in every instance of New Testament conversion recorded in *Acts of Apostles*, specific mention is made of baptism; that it is the only institution mentioned in the Bible that is to be done "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It has been objected that the churches of Christ emphazise baptism too much in their preaching and worship. This objection has no foundation in fact. All that we seek to do is to put baptism right where Jesus and the apostles put it—as one of the essential terms of membership in the church of Christ, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:15-16, etc. If other preachers would do the same thing, it would not be necessary to do any repair work at the water gate. We have been accused of being "water salvationists."

This could not be true, because, if we were advocates of "water salvation," we would surely practise infant christening. We do not sprinkle babies, however, because we do not believe there is any salvation in water). Again, all denominations, with the exception of the Quakers, require some sort of an act in which water is used, and which they call baptism, as essential to church membership; yet many of them will accept a substitute for New Testament baptism made by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says: "The Council of Ravenna, in 1311, was the first council of the church which legalized baptism by sprinkling, by leaving it to the choice of the officiating minister." (Art., *Baptism*, Vol. III., p. 351). So far as I know there is no authority of any note who will deny the fact that baptism, in New Testament times, was immersion. This is universally admitted by all Catholic and Protestant scholars. (For extracts, see *Did Jesus Command Immersion?*, by Lawson, Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, O.). Until the entire Christian world becomes willing to accept Paul's statement that there is "one baptism," we shall be compelled to go on repairing the wall of spiritual Zion at at the water gate.

3. *Nehemiah's Courage.* (1) (a) Nehemiah had his enemies, among whom were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, Neh. 2:19-20. These men opposed and ridiculed his plans. (b) So the pioneers of the Restoration movement encountered bitter opposition. Denominations forgot their differences and united in opposition to the primitive gospel message. Houses of worship were locked against them, and oftentimes they had to preach in

private homes or out under the trees. (Illustrate by "Raccoon" John Smith). Children were often disinherited for becoming "Christians" only. They were called "Campbellites," "legalists," "dogmatists," "water dogs," "infidels," "mudheads," etc. Their enemies misrepresented them by saying: "They do not believe in the Holy Spirit." "They preach water salvation." "They do not accept the Old Testament." "They do not believe in conversion." "They are as bad as the Mormons," etc.

(2) But Nehemiah and his helpers believed in God and went right ahead with their work. So did the pioneers. They were not infected with the microbe of "religious courtesy." They preached the Word of God without fear or favor and great multitudes accepted it. It was nothing uncommon in those days for entire Methodist and Baptist Churches to forsake denominationalism and become "churches of Christ." The result was that, from just a small group of earnest men, this movement grew, within a century, to number one and one-half millions of adherents. Its growth has been unparalleled in the history of Christianity save by the growth of the primitive church under the preaching of the apostles.

(3) Again, Nehemiah's forces were united at the beginning. See Neh. 3. Those were the days of unity and achievement. After a time, however, there were murmurings and complaints, followed by actual apostasy and treason, Neh. 4:10, 5:1-5. The same thing is true of the Restoration movement. The pioneers had but one message and they preached it in its purity. They were of the same mind and the same judgment, and they all spoke the same thing. In the course of the Centennial

Convention at Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1908, twenty sermons were delivered by as many Christian preachers on one Lord's Day afternoon, and the theme of every sermon was "The Lordship of Christ." No uncertain tones were heard in the pioneer days of the movement. When the backwash of German rationalism began to sweep through the colleges and universities of the United States, however, these conditions changed. False teachers arose who proclaimed the dogmas of "modernism." "Federation" and "evolution" became the magic words of the hour in "scholarly" circles. Evangelists began to turn aside from "the old paths" into strange methods and messages. "Union meetings," in which the terms of the gospel were pruned to meet the shortcomings of denominationalism, became quite common. The result was temporary stagnation.

(4) Note how Nehemiah rid himself of the traitors in his ranks, 5:13. He called upon the people to put out of their ranks all that were unworthy. The same method should be employed by the churches of Christ; they should purge their ranks of all unworthy preachers and teachers, not by high-handed ecclesiastical methods nor creedal statements, but by the simple process of withdrawing moral and financial support. Any minister, missonary or evangelist who will accept financial support and sustenance from brethren who believe the New Testament message and want it preached in its purity and then use funds so contributed for the dissemination of materialistic and rationalistic propaganda, is a *hypocrite* in the fullest sense of the term. Let the infidels, materialists and Unitarians build their own schools and churches and support them with their own money, and not with funds contributed by faith-

ful servants of Christ! Let those who deny the deity of Jesus and the authority of the Scriptures go to the Unitarians where they belong! Let those who advocate "open membership" align themselves with the Congregationalists or "Christian Connectionists!" At any rate, let all churches of Christ purge themselves of wolves in sheep's clothing who are spreading the propaganda of compromise and disunity!

4. *Nehemiah's Perseverance.* (1) Honor is always due one who *begins* a great undertaking, and double honor is due one who begins a great work and *completes* it. A former governor of Massachusetts, in the course of a nominating speech before a political convention, paid an eloquent tribute to his candidate in these words: "It is my honor to nominate a man for your governor, who, when he was a little boy, always hoed to the end of the row." Nehemiah was a great man because he did what he set out to do; he did not stop until the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, 6:15.

(2) (a) When Nehemiah's enemies saw that he was succeeding in spite of their opposition, they sought to compromise the issue, 6:1-4. "Come down into the valley of Ono and let us talk the matter over," was their plea; to which Nehemiah replied, "I am doing a great work, so that I can not come down." (b) In like manner the plea of the churches of Christ was ridiculed at first. The ideal of Christian unity on the basis of the New Testament was laughed down in derision, and denominationalism was defended as essential to the progress of the Christian faith. To-day conditions are reversed. Practically all denominations are interested in the problem of the reunion of Christendom, but they do not seem willing as yet that this unity should come on

the basis of the New Testament because such a step would mean the abandonment of their cherished forms and traditions. They want to compromise the issue now. "Come down into the valley of Ono," they say, "and let us get together on some sort of a compromise basis." For example, the Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Interchurch World Movement, the Philadelphia Plan of Union, and the United Church of Canada. While the churches of Christ, by virtue of their historic plea, can not but be sympathetic towards all movements in the direction of unity, yet they can not afford to sacrifice their Scriptural position for any consolidation brought about my mutual concession and compromise. Matters which are Scriptural and right should never be conceded nor compromised. No church nor individual has any moral right to be "broader" than the New Testament. The churches of Christ have a great work to do; they can not afford to come down from their undenominational position, nor to squander time and talent and energy in the formation of any state church or "league of denominations," or any similar patch-work affair which men might seek to substitute for the ideal of Christian unity for which Jesus prayed. They should adhere strictly to the immortal slogan: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

(3) When Sanballat found that his four invitations to conference and compromise were rejected, he sent a fifth, and with it a letter in which he mentioned certain rumors alleged to have reached his ears concerning Nehemiah's work and support. These rumors were his own fabrications and were intended to confuse the young builder and spread dissatisfaction within his

ranks. Nehemiah detected his deceit and replied, "there are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart," 6:5-9. Many times it has been said to those who are known as Christians only, "You want us all to come *your way*, and into *your church*." To these statements I reply, "There are no such things as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." I have no Way but Christ—He is the Way to the Father, John 14:6. I have no church but His church to offer you. I have no doctrine but His doctrine, I offer you no creed but Christ, no book of discipline but the New Testament. Why is it that men will deliberately misrepresent this plain, undenominational, New Testament platform?

(4) When Nehemiah had actually rebuilt the walls, together with Ezra, he called all the people into the street before the water gate. There the book of the law of Moses was read to them in its entirety, and its ancient laws, usages and customs were reestablished. So may it be when the walls of spiritual Zion come to include all the saints of God who have forsaken denominational names and creeds and have become one in Christ Jesus. The ancient and apostolic laws, precedents and institutions will have been restored, and Christian unity will have been achieved in fact. See Neh. 8.

Conclusion: (1) We are just now at the critical time in the history of the Restoration movement.

> "Never were men's minds so open to the reception of new ideas. Old opinions and prejudices are in the melting pot. We are living in a new world. Denominationalism is doomed. Christian men are impressed by the need for a united front on the foreign field. They are moving towards the necessity for union. We are all taking the joys of a larger fellowship

in worship and service, and our appetite is keen. Like Oliver Twist, we are asking for more. . Let us restudy our incomparable plea for union on the New Testament ideal in the light of to-day. Let us evangelize. Let us strengthen our stakes, and lengthen our cords. Above all, let us consecrate ourselves anew to a life of holiness, of separateness from sin and worldliness, of devotion to our crucified and risen Savior. In this sign, and this sign alone, shall we conquer."

—(From sermon on "Church Union in Canada," by George Quiggin, printed in *The Christian Evangelist*, issue of July 2, 1925).

(2) The churches of Christ must go forward. They can not afford at this critical time to compromise the Scriptural plea for unity on the basis of the New Testament. They can not abandon work at the water gate.

"When the walls around spiritual Jerusalem shall have been restored, God's people shall be one and the prayer of Jesus shall have been answered; Christ shall have been exalted above all sects and denominations; God's Word shall have come into its own and shall have taken its place above all human creeds and opinions of men; all who have entered the church will have come in as did those entered under the preaching of the apostles; the church shall have no denominational name, creed, ordinance or barrier to Christian unity and Christ shall then be crowned the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The Lord hasten the day!"

—Book, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II., p. 205.

(3) Now that you fully understand this Scriptural plea and this undenominational position, it is your duty to get on the right side. No man can do his best unless he lives up to the Scriptural light which he possesses. If you understand this matchless plea, it is your duty to *act now*. Will you not forsake denominationalism, and resolve here and now to do your part in helping rebuild the walls of spiritual Zion? Come while we sing.

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